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BY REV. ALBERT RUNG

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THE SEMINARIAN
HIS CHARACTER AND WORK

Nihil Obstat.

REMY LAFORT, S.T.D.

Censor.

Imprimatur.

✠JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY,
Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, September 11, 1916.

The Seminarian

His Character and Work

By Rev. Albert Rung
Priest of the Diocese of Buffalo



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PREFACE

THERE is no time in the life of a priest more important than the years he spends in the seminary. What a good home training is for the child the seminary training is for the priest. And as the mind and heart are most docile and receptive of good teachings in childhood, so also are the minds and hearts of future priests most open to grand ideals and noble impressions during their time at the seminary.

Particularly for this reason the thought suggested itself to the author to put in writing the contents of the following pages, which are, partly, a recollection of the earnest words often addressed to the seminarians of his day, and a modest commentary on the rules of the seminary which he attended — augmented by quotations from authors whose words lend authority to the statements made.

Preface

May God bless these pages, and may those called to the holy priesthood find in them high ideals, and an incentive to virtuous practises.

THE AUTHOR

FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH OF MARY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I <i>Vocation to the Priesthood — Marks of a Vocation — Refusal to follow Vocation — Religious Priesthood — Secular Priesthood.</i>	11
II <i>The Seminary: The Sublimity of the Priesthood — Responsibility — Piety.</i>	21
III <i>Prayer: Morning Prayer, Meditation, Holy Mass, Holy Communion, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, Confession — Spiritual Reading — Examination of Conscience — "Recollectio Menstrua" — Retreats — Special Devotions — The Sacred Heart — The Blessed Virgin Mary.</i>	33
IV <i>Obedience: Internal, as a means of Self-denial — Silence — Special Rules: Rising and Retiring, Sickness, Finances, Debts — Use of Time — Visits — Vacations — Student Officials — Students and Authorities — Sundry Rules.</i>	79
V <i>Fraternal Love: Particular Friendships: No Friendship: Friends in the World — Etiquette — Wit and Humor — Conversation — Petty Suspiciousness — Cheerfulness — Good Example.</i>	113

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI <i>Clerical Modesty: Dress, Manner, Eyes, Reading, Speech, Cassock — Modesty in Taste, in Furnishings.</i>	131
VII <i>Study: Prayer, Humility, Efficiency, Secular Knowledge, Sacred Eloquence, Liturgy, Singing — Sociology — Pedagogy — Catechetics — Love for Children.</i>	143
VIII <i>Bodily Care: Eating and Drinking, Table Manners, Intoxicants, Exercise — Association with Others.</i>	161
IX <i>Seminary Spirit — Self-sanctification — Obedience — Brotherly Love — Modesty — Study.</i>	173

THE SEMINARIAN

THE SEMINARIAN

CHAPTER I

*Vocation to the Priesthood · Marks of a
Vocation · Refusal to follow Voca-
tion · Religious Priesthood
Secular Priesthood*

WHO should become a priest? This is a question often asked by young men who wish to ascertain whether they themselves have a vocation to the priesthood.

The holy priesthood is truly an exalted state. Much has been written concerning it which inspires awe. And again, the example of St. Francis of Assisi and other saints in refusing to become priests — due to an overwhelming sense of their own unworthiness — may act as a deterrent to some sensitive souls who give this sublime life serious consideration.

The Seminarian

Despite the exalted dignity of the priesthood our blessed Saviour wishes men to enter this holy state, to assume the sacred burdens and consequent dignity of the priesthood, for through the all wise design of God, this was His chosen plan to apply the fruits of the Redemption and thus save men's souls.

"Many are called but few are chosen," are words which apply also to the subject of vocations. "Not chosen" — not because almighty God is unwilling to have them priests, but rather because they lack that generosity necessary to supply the proper dispositions in themselves. Many a youth receives the inspiration to enter the priesthood, but when he reviews the sacrifices required by the evangelical counsels, like the young man in Holy Scripture, he goes away sad, reluctant to make these sacrifices. . And yet the grace of God is never wanting, and many more could become good priests if, relying on God's grace, they courageously and generously heeded Christ's invitation to follow Him.

In the light of the decision given by a
[12]

The Seminarian

special commission of Cardinals and approved by the late Pope Pius X concerning a teaching of Canon Lahitton on vocations, it follows that any young man physically able, moral, and of sufficient mental acumen may become a priest if only he has a right intention.

This decree affirms that a vocation to the priesthood does not necessarily include any interior inclination of the person or prompting of the Holy Ghost. All that is required from the aspirant to ordination is "a right intention and such fitness of nature and grace, as evinced in integrity of life and sufficiency of learning, as will give a well-founded hope of his rightly discharging the obligations of the priesthood." Given these conditions, a true vocation is unquestionably conferred by the Bishop at the moment of ordination.¹

There are young men who know as if by inspiration that they should become priests. A sweet attraction urges them; they never doubt or hesitate, and are sensibly drawn

¹ "Shall I Be a Priest?" Rev. William Doyle, S.J., p. 24.

The Seminarian

on by the Holy Ghost. These favored souls are as sweetly conscious of the fact of their selection as if they had heard the Master's voice saying: "I have chosen you."

This inspiration or sensible attraction, however, is not an essential mark of vocation. One may be a fit candidate for the priesthood without this inclination, and even with a dread or fear of the duties and sacrifices of the priestly life. Such a one prepares himself for the priestly career because of a conviction that, as a priest, with God's help, he can best attain the end for which he was created and consequently his own salvation. "A person is known to have a true vocation to enter a particular career in life," says Father C. Coppens, S.J., "if he feels sincerely convinced as far as he can judge with God's grace, that such a career is the best for him to attain the end for which God places him on earth, and is found fit by his talents, habits and circumstances to enter on that career with a fair prospect of succeeding in the same."¹ A determination to enter the priesthood based upon the above consideration is

¹ "Vocations," p. 11. Rev. William Doyle, S.J.

The Seminarian

sufficient assurance that a young man makes no mistake in entering upon the priestly state.

Father Vermeersch, S.J., of Louvain, in his treatise "*De Religiosis Institutis et Personis*" affirms that there are two signs of a vocation to the priesthood: "One negative, the absence of any impediment (physical deformity, insanity, etc.), the other positive, a firm resolution with the help of God, to serve Him in the ecclesiastical state. Is your intention honest and your strength and ability sufficient? he asks; do you wish to be a priest, not to have an easy, comfortable life, or for the honor and esteem it will bring you, but to do your part in the building up of Christ's Kingdom on earth, convinced that a priest can do more for God's dishonored glory, the saving of perishing souls and the sanctification of his own? If so, a boy may go to the altar of God without doubt whether 'he hath been chosen to the sacred ministry and apostolate' (Acts I) happy and secure in the thought that the Lord hath turned His eyes of love upon him and marked him as His own."¹

¹ "Shall I Be a Priest?" Rev. William Doyle, S.J., p. 25.

The Seminarian

Given the other requisites, therefore, the firm will with God's help to be a priest, actuated by the intention of glorifying God, saving souls and securing one's own salvation is a sufficient mark of a vocation. "This firm will itself is a special grace of God, 'for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will.' In the invitation to the counsels, the will is the only condition mentioned by our Lord: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.'" ¹

The young man considering the matter of a priestly career must, therefore, seriously determine whether his talents, habits, and circumstances fit him for this holy state. If he decides in the affirmative let him fix his intention, namely, to become a priest for God's glory and his own salvation, and then begin to prepare for this sublime career. Suarez tells us: "We are to consider less our strength in the matter than the help of grace, for it is in God we must

¹ "Vocations Explained." By a Vincentian, p. 31.

The Seminarian

particularly trust. He will not desert us if only we are faithful to His inspirations."¹ And St. Francis of Sales assures us that: "it matters little how we commence provided we are determined to persevere."

Must I accept the invitation? St. Alphonsus says it is not a mortal sin to refuse, but that it is more difficult for those who refuse to save their souls. "But putting aside the question of sin, we must admit that one who clearly realizes that the priestly state is best for him and consequently more pleasing to God, would, by neglecting to avail himself of this grace, betray a certain ungenerosity of soul and a lack of appreciation of spiritual things, in depriving himself of a gift which would be the source of so many graces and spiritual advantages."²

With the decision to become a priest the matter of vocation is not yet fully settled. There is still to decide whether the young man is to join the secular priesthood or the religious priesthood. Each of these states has its advantages and responsibilities. "Hence

¹ "Vocations," p. 24.

² "What shall I be?" Rev. F. Cassilly, S.J., p. 38.

The Seminarian

in deciding between these two states a person should think earnestly and ask the grace to know whether he is called to the secular or the religious priesthood." Again the decision must be based upon what the will of God is for the individual. To know what the will of God is forms the next task. The inclination of the young man, his habits, circumstances, prospects of success, and the prudent advice of his spiritual director are to be considered. If this is judiciously done, with reliance upon the aid of the Holy Ghost, there will be little chance for a mistake in a selection. The religious state is undoubtedly the higher. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "Priests even having the care of souls are not 'in statu perfectionis per se,' though individually they may be very virtuous and very holy, whereas religious as such, professing the evangelical counsels, rise higher, though individually they may be unfaithful to and unworthy of their lofty vocation. But the question is by no means subjective, but objective. Just as the ecclesiastical state is higher than that of laymen, who nevertheless may be very good, so the relig-

The Seminarian

ious state — as a state — is more perfect because it involves a total renunciation of self and earthly things so as to reproduce more vividly the image of Him, who humbleth Himself, being obedient unto death.”¹

St. Alphonsus gives as signs of a religious vocation: First, the desire to fly from the dangers of the world, to make sure one's salvation, to be more and more united with God. Second, the absence of positive impediments such as ill-health, want of ability, etc. Third, fitness for, together with acceptance by the Order.

Those who have reached the conclusion that religious life is best for them can have no reason to doubt that the design formed in their hearts is from God, for St. Thomas says, “There is no need to try whether such a project has God for its author since that is certain and need not be discussed.” If the other requisites be present they ought without hesitation to enter religion.

The divine call to a more perfect life is undoubtedly a special grace, and a great

¹ St. Thomas 2, 2 p. 184.

The Seminarian

one, which God does not give to all.”¹ Such therefore who, due to circumstances, disinclination, or lack of fitness for the religious state, betray the fact that they have not received the call to a religious Order, may confidently become secular priests, assured that cooperating with God’s grace they may become very virtuous and very holy, and may perhaps rise higher than many a brother priest in the religious state. “God wills that all men should be saved,” says St. Alphonsus. “As in heaven He has distinguished different degrees of glory, so on earth He has established different states of life, as so many different ways of gaining heaven.” Let us but be solicitous to be in the state of life God wills for us, and then the way to heaven will be easy. “One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.”²

¹ St. Alphonsus: Counsels concerning a Religious Vocation. C. II.

² Ps. XXVI 4.

CHAPTER II

The Seminary · The Sublimity of the Priesthood Responsibility Piety

ORIGINALLY, a seminary signified a place where seed was sown; a place in which young seedlings were nurtured, and made strong to bear transplanting. It was only later that the word was employed to designate a school.

The original meaning, however, gives a most beautiful definition of what a clerical seminary really is. A place, indeed, where the seeds of virtue and knowledge are sown in the heart of the young aspirant for the priesthood, who, after a short time, is to be transplanted into the world, there to bring forth abundant fruit unto the Lord. "I have chosen you and appointed you, that you should bring forth fruit and your fruit should remain."¹

¹ John xv, 16.

The Seminarian

The purpose of the seminary is important. And unless this purpose is recognized and continually borne in mind by the seminarian, he may easily frustrate its attainment. It is necessary, therefore, that he should be conscious of the task which is to be performed in his heart — having, above all, a deep sense of earnestness. This earnestness must pervade his whole seminary life so that the part which is to be supplied by him shall never be wanting.

The quality of earnestness cannot fail to be present if the sublimity of the priesthood: hence the requisite sanctity of the priest; the responsibility of this office: consequently the necessary knowledge required, and the comparatively short time in which these are to be obtained, are properly grasped and understood.

The work of the priest is the work of Christ. When Christ, shortly before His ascension into heaven, was providing, as it were, for those of the future who would not enjoy His personal ministry, He said to the Apostles, and in them to all the succeeding bishops and priests: “As the Father hath

The Seminarian

sent Me, I also send you.”¹ He gave to the Apostles the same office and power with which He was commissioned by the Father. They were to continue His work, so that all people might, through Christ’s Apostles and their successors, partake of Christ’s priestly ministrations. They should “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”² “Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them,”³ He tells them; thus imparting to them the sacred power He possessed. What dignity to bestow upon a mortal! Chosen not only to represent Jesus, but to be empowered with His powers; not only to work in His name, but to be the instrument through which He works! Can there be an office more sublime? “O Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? . . . In creating him, Thou hast made him a little lesser than the angels.”⁴ Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, however, Thou dost elevate him above the angels, and make him partaker of Thine own divine power and dignity!

¹ John xx, 21.

² Matt. xxviii, 19.

³ John xx, 22.

⁴ Psalm viii, 5-6.

The Seminarian

Were these the only powers and mission of the priesthood, how great would be the sanctity they presuppose and require. But how much more sanctity is demanded for that greatest and holiest office of all, the offering of the daily sacrifice to our Lord God, the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, who is the Sacred Victim of this sacrifice. How holy those feet should be which lead the priest to the sacred altar; how holy that mouth which speaks the words of consecration; how holy those hands which raise the sacred oblation as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to the almighty Father; how holy those eyes which perceive this Sacred Victim, veiled under the appearances of bread and wine; how holy that heart upon which daily rests the Holy of holies! The sublimity of the priest's office and the sanctity necessary must fill the aspirant for such dignity with an earnestness proportionate to the task he has before him in preparing for such a holy calling.

St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews exhorts the Christians to obey their ecclesiastical superiors: "For they watch," he

The Seminarian

writes, "as being to render an account of your souls."¹ What a great responsibility for priests! They must give an account of the souls committed to their charge. Who dare take this responsibility upon himself without a sufficient knowledge to guide souls to God? And who can attain this knowledge without earnest efforts in the seminary? It is true that not all can acquire equally great knowledge. Some are very talented, others are less so. But it is also true that each can make an equally earnest effort to acquire the knowledge necessary to fit one for his vocation. And if such effort be made, the help of the Holy Ghost may be relied upon; if it is not made, a reliance upon such help would be presumption. Earnestness of purpose in the effort to acquire virtue and knowledge is absolutely necessary, so that the sojourn in the seminary must be looked upon as an investment of capital which shall bear interest during the years of priesthood.

An additional reason, the last that shall be adduced for such earnestness, is the shortness

¹ Hebrews xiii, 17.

The Seminarian

of time for preparation. St. Gregory Nazianzen once said: "Extreme old age would not be a long preparation for the priesthood."¹ If a lifetime of preparation for the priesthood would not be sufficient, how lamentably short seem the four or six years in the seminary. How short these few years are to prepare one's self to labor for the greater honor and glory of God, for the spiritual good of others, and for one's own salvation!

There are some who defer the time for earnest work in the seminary until their last year, an entirely wrong and exceedingly dangerous proceeding. To neglect study for any length of time is positively sinful. Moralists demand of confessors a knowledge which will enable them to understand and solve the ordinary cases which are heard in confession, and, in more difficult cases, to be prudently able to doubt, so that they may consult others more learned, or their books.² Now not even this is possible if, during this time, study is shirked and neglected. As to the attainment of habits of virtue in the

¹ Oration xi, P. lxxii.

² Noldin, "De poenitentia, de scientia confessarii."

The Seminarian

last year, that, to say the least, rarely occurs. A habit is formed through repeated similar actions. But when the attention is needed for the acquirement of only one virtue, and the man tries to acquire, as well, those he has hitherto neglected, the result, as a rule, is seldom happy. It is true an earnest effort in the last year may draw down the special grace of God. Here and there a successful result may ensue — but these are rather the exceptions, and might almost be termed miracles of grace. Still, such exceptions give those who have squandered their opportunities a last chance of reparation.

Hence your resolves for your stay at the seminary ought to be to strive with all earnestness to prepare for your sublime, but responsible, office. In the words of the great Pope Pius IX, addressed to a renowned seminary in Europe: “We exhort you again and again, that, ever mindful of your vocations, you may daily shine more and more with the adornment of all virtues, and studiously cultivate especially the sacred sciences, free from the danger of any error, so that, known for sanctity of life and praised for salutary

The Seminarian

learning, you may be able, under the direction of your bishops, strenuously to fight the battle of the Lord and care for the salvation of souls.”¹

The true dignity and excellence of man lie in fulfilling the will of God and in keeping His commandments. No matter how learned a man may be, if he has not holiness he cannot render himself fit to rightly exercise the sacred functions of the priesthood. A priest *must* be holy.

In what does piety consist? It consists in an exact observance through reverence and love of God of one's religious duties. “A strong life depends entirely upon habits. Feelings and impressions vary, and cannot be trusted to serve as a basis of conduct. Every act, little and great, necessarily tends to produce a corresponding habit. We may choose our habits, inasmuch as we may choose the kinds of acts we perform; but we are not free to form habits or not to form them. The fundamental habits to be developed in the soul of the priest is: promptness

¹ Ex litteris Pii ix ad Convict. Oenipont. A.D. 20. Novemb. 1862.

The Seminarian

to do what the interests of God and of souls require; docility to obey every inclination of the divine will, and readiness to subordinate to these every selfish impulse." Therefore the cultivation of piety from the very first year in the seminary is a matter of great importance.

The hours given to pious works, as well as the acts prescribed, are wisely enjoined for one's own sanctification. Any one who thinks that time devoted to such works is time lost, or taken from study, is certainly not persuaded of the truth of the Psalmist's words, when he says: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."¹ By which he means that nothing can be done without God's grace and blessing. Unless God's grace is begged for frequently, and His blessing invoked upon our studies, they shall be in vain. One's sermons and instructions, exhortations and admonitions may be learned, indeed, but as Cardinal Manning says: "The heart does not go with the words, and to ears that can hear there is a hollow ring in all they say."

¹ Psalm cxxvi, 1.

The Seminarian

The words of a priest who is not deeply grounded in piety will be of little avail, and his works will not bear the fruit desired. In order to inflame others with the love of God one's self must be inflamed with the love of God. St. Bernard truly says: "*Flamina pastoris lux gregis.*" Cardinal Manning adds: "When the priest is kindled with the fire of the Sacred Heart his people, too, will walk in a great light." Hence the great importance of piety.

But what is the aim of piety? The aim of piety is to acquire perfection. Christ in His Sermon on the Mount, enjoined the people: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."¹ If this is expected of all, how much more is it demanded of priests? St. Alphonsus in his moral theology says: "For the reception of Holy Orders simple sanctifying grace by no means suffices. . . . Interior perfection is required, as is proved by the unanimous consent of the Fathers and Doctors, who with one assent demand it."² This perfection does not mean

¹ Matt. v, 48.

² Theol. Mor. de Sac. Ord. Lib. IV, 57.

The Seminarian

a sinless state — rather it means the will never to commit a deliberate sin.

Perfection supposes asceticism. Father Moritz Meschler, S.J., in his book¹ on the “Foundation of a Spiritual Life,” calls his work a vest-pocket edition of asceticism. He sums up all the virtues necessary for an ascetic life into three great virtues: namely, prayer, self-abnegation, love of God. The practise of these three virtues leads to perfection. Ample opportunity is afforded in the seminary for the practise of all three. By faithfully fulfilling the works of piety prescribed, the first requisite of prayer is fulfilled. By conscientious observance of the rules of the seminary, the self-abnegation practised is more pleasing to God than the wearing of a hair-shirt, and long fastings without observance of the rules. By patient submission to the will of superiors and resigned endurance of the trials incident to community life, a love of God is exercised which cannot fail to call down God’s grace and blessing.

The requirements to attain perfection

¹ “Drei Grundlehren des Geistlichen Lebens.”

The Seminarian

while at the seminary seem so small that one may be inclined to doubt whether they really can be productive of perfection. But here it must be remembered that to observe the rules of the seminary is no easy matter. He who succeeds is exercising many virtues in a high degree. An earnest trial will convince any one who doubts this statement. Secondly: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater."¹

¹ Luke xvi, 10.

CHAPTER III

*Prayer: Morning Prayer, Meditation, Holy
Mass, Holy Communion, Visits to the
Blessed Sacrament, Confession · Spirit-
ual Reading · Examination of Con-
science · “Recollectio Menstrua”
Retreats · Special Devotions
The Sacred Heart
The Blessed
Virgin Mary*

A CONSIDERATION of the three means of attaining perfection mentioned at the close of the last chapter would now be in place — but we shall here take up only that of prayer. Self-denial and its motives will be interwoven with the contents of the following pages, while the love of God ought to be something self-understood for seminarians. “Let us love God because God first hath loved us.”¹

The works of piety of the seminarian begin as soon as he awakes in the morning, continue

¹ 1 John iv, 19.

The Seminarian

intermittently during the day, and end only when he closes his eyes in sleep at night. "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day,"¹ ought to be the first waking thought. "Let the day begin with an act of obedience and of mortification, by rising the instant that you are called. Be so prompt that, if possible, you may wake on the floor. Get up as if the bed were on fire, as St. Aloysius recommends. Those who do so are unconscious of any pain in rising, while the extra five minutes, for which perhaps a bit of a headache or some other excuse pleads, is quite enough to make it very painful, and to fill you with remorse or ill-humor, a bad preparation, either of them, for your meditation. Those five minutes more in bed never yet did any one any good. They will not cure a headache, nor will they rest you if you are tired. Offer them generously to God, that you may begin your day well, and that He may give you the grace of making a good meditation."² Commend your-

¹ Psalm lxii, 2.

² "Meditation, An Instruction for Novices," by Rev. John Morris, S.J.

The Seminarian

self to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, and to His blessed Mother. Dress and wash briskly; while doing so recall the subject of your particular examen, and the matter of your meditation. When the signal is given repair to the chapel for morning prayer. "Unite attentively and devoutly with him who says the vocal prayer." Remember that there is a special efficacy attached to prayer in common. "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."¹ "In reciting prayers always try to realize what you say and mean it." And for this purpose, before even the shortest prayer, pause and reflect on what you are about to do.

After morning prayer proceed immediately to your meditation. An easy method for meditation — I am supposing that the points have already been prepared — is the following: Begin the meditation by saying a preparatory prayer. That of St. Ignatius was this: "O Lord, my God, give me the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service

¹ Matt. xviii, 20.

The Seminarian

and praise of Thy divine majesty." Or the following might be used:

"Immensa majestas, Domine meus et Deus meus, non sum dignus, attollere oculos meos in coelum prae multitudine iniquitatum mearum. Loquar tamen pulvis et cinis ad Dominum meum, quoniam suavis es et multae misericordiae tuae, et invocabo nomen sanctum tuum et meditabor in mandatis tuis, ut discam et custodiam omnes justificationes tuas.

"O Pater et Fili et Spiritus sancte, illumina intellectum meum, ut quae ad majorem gloriam tuam, ad salutem et perfectionem propriam et alienam agenda vel omittenda sunt intellegam. Excita voluntatem meam, ut anteactae vitae meae culpas et negligentias ex toto corde detester, et quae agenda cognovero, efficaciter desiderem, teque Deum meum, amem super omnia quia infinite amabilis es.

"Adjuva potentias meas ad agendum vel patiendum fortiter et constanter ad imitationem, Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Ducis mei, quidquid volueris, et quia tibi Deo meo placebit, Amen."

Having said this preparatory prayer, two preludes to the meditation follow. After

The Seminarian

briefly recalling the subject of your meditation in general, you form your first prelude: "the composition of place." This consists in fixing a picture of the subject in the imagination, in order to keep the thoughts from wandering. The picture, however, must not be a lifeless one, as of something which occurred many centuries ago. It must be vivid, as if it were happening at present before our very eyes. Should the subject not allow of such a picture, as for example the abstract subject, Sin, then this first prelude may be omitted. The second prelude is a petition to God for light, for understanding, and for strength of will. This much forms the introduction to the meditation, and should occupy but a few minutes.

We now come to the body of the meditation, which again is divided into three parts: the first for the memory, the second for the understanding, and the third for the will.

It must be remarked that by thus assigning a part of the meditation for the memory, another for the understanding, and a third for the will, it is not meant that these three faculties should be exclusively devoted to

The Seminarian

these respective parts. No, all the faculties of the mind and soul should be active during the entire meditation, and by thus assigning individual parts of the meditation to the different faculties, it is only meant that these faculties are preeminently active at these times, due to the psychological order of thinking.

The memory is brought into action by recalling the points which were prepared for meditation the preceding evening. The memory is often aided by placing questions before it, such as Who? What? Where? Why? How? When? For whom? With what fruit? With what love? Select those questions which will suggest answers most useful for you. The work of the memory is comparatively servile, and it would be still more so if the line were sharply drawn; in reality the understanding comes to its assistance, taking up the answer of the memory.

The understanding now asks itself, what practical conclusion is to be drawn from this truth? Having arrived at a conclusion, motives for the conclusion should be brought

The Seminarian

forth. These usually take the form of the following: It is expedient, useful, delightful, easy, and necessary, that the conclusion arrived at be put into action or be believed, or that God be more and more loved and honored, etc. Next a little examination and a resolution for the future ought to be inaugurated by the understanding: What have I done hitherto? What shall I do henceforth? What is the obstacle? What means am I to take?

The understanding now addresses itself to the will, which is blind, and requires leading. The reason for the resolution or the fruit, whatever it may be, is made clear to the will, and the will at once makes an act of faith in the divine truth proposed, and with fervor it ought to embrace the practical conclusion arrived at. Thus affections of faith, sorrow, humility, confidence, hope, praise, thanksgiving, and love are aroused in the soul. These are then put into words, and with the resolution formed become the subject matter of the conclusion of the meditation, the colloquy — in which we occupy ourselves in speaking to God, placing our

The Seminarian

miseries, weaknesses, and resolutions before Him; asking His aid in our battle with the world, the devil, and the flesh, or losing ourselves in admiration of His greatness, goodness, and mercy. The meditation might then be closed, as recommended by St. Francis of Sales, by saying vocally an Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed.

"After your prayer," the same saint advises, "out of these considerations which you have made, gather a little nosegay of devotion, to smell at all the rest of the day." This nosegay of devotion ought, for the most part, be the good resolution we have formed, or the thought which brought warmth to the heart during the meditation.

A short summary of the whole is the following:

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. Preparatory prayer.
- b. First Prelude: Composition of place.
- c. Second Prelude: Petition for fruit.

The Seminarian

II. BODY OF THE MEDITATION

a. Memory.

Who? What? Where? Why?

How? When?

For whom? With what fruit?

With what love?

b. Understanding.

Practical conclusion.

Its motives, expedient, useful,
delightful, easy, necessary.

What have I done hitherto?

What shall I do henceforth?

What is the obstacle?

What means am I to take?

c. Will.

Affections: faith, sorrow, hu-
mility, confidence, hope,
praise, thanksgiving, love.

Resolutions: practical, humble,
devout.

III. CONCLUSION

Recapitulation and Colloquy.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed.

Nosegay of devotion for the day.

[41]

The Seminarian

Some time during the morning a few minutes ought to be devoted to a reflection upon the meditation, and in it a brief examination should be made in regard to the meditation itself, its faults, if any, examined, and the resolution again called to mind and renewed. This giving of an account of one's self to one's self has the good effect of preventing us from falling into a habit of making careless and fruitless meditations. Often the faults of the morning's meditation can be rectified during this short reflection, and at least a resolution for the day may be taken. Much will thus be gained.

The subject of meditation has been dwelt upon at such length because it is so necessary for a spiritual life and yet so easily neglected and underestimated. St. Teresa says of it: "He who can use his intellect in the way of meditation on what he is, on what he owes to God, on the great sufferings of God for him, his own scanty service in return, and on the reward God reserves for those who love Him, learns how to defend himself against his own thoughts and against the dangers and perils of sin."

The Seminarian

Our late Holy Father Pius X, in his letter to the clergy on the occasion of his jubilee celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, spoke in high terms of the benefit and necessity of meditation.

Cardinal Gibbons gives expression to his esteem for it in the following words: "A meditation every morning, though it be brief, should rarely be omitted. It is a refreshing and purifying bath, preparing you to appear with a clean heart before the great King at the sacrificial banquet, and invigorating you for the work of the day."

The next work of piety which claims the seminarian's attention, after his meditation is finished, is Holy Mass.

"Holy Mass, in comparison with the other services of the Church, is like the diamond to its setting."¹ "As numerous as the drops of the ocean, as the rays of the sun, as the stars of the heavens, as the flowers of the fields, are the mysteries which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass contains," says St. Bonaventure. And surely there is no exag-

¹ P. Hugo Hurter.

The Seminarian

geration of the truth in these statements, for this Holy Sacrifice is a renewal of the sacrifice on the cross, differing only in the mode of offering, it being on Calvary in a bloody manner and in the Mass in an unbloody manner.

If these truths of faith are recalled to mind, the proper tenor for hearing Holy Mass is suggested. In this second sacrifice there is a treasury of grace upon which we may draw for our daily spiritual needs. Grace affording consolation in the trials which beset us, grace affording aid in our efforts to obtain virtues, to strive against temptation, and for whatever our souls require.

It is well to become acquainted with the *Missale* early in one's clerical career, and as the prayers composed and authorized by the Church are always accompanied with a special blessing, the seminarian might follow the priest saying the Mass by reading the prayers in the *Missale*.

However, from time to time the manner of hearing Mass ought to be changed. Occasionally the rosary might be said, or other prayers read from a prayer-book. Another

The Seminarian

good way to employ the time of Holy Mass is to meditate on the mysteries there represented. Even reading a spiritual book during Mass is not to be condemned, although this method should not be used too often.

The Fathers of the Council of Trent enacted a decree in which they expressed the wish that the faithful receive sacramental Communion as often as they attend Holy Mass. If this is desired of all the faithful, who will be surprised at the wish of our late Pontiff, Pius X, that the custom of frequent Communion "be promoted as much as possible in ecclesiastical seminaries, whose students are looking to the service of the altar."¹ And is Christ's vicar upon earth able to voice a wish other than that of Christ Himself?

Frequently therefore, even daily, ought the seminarian approach the sacred table. There is no better way to advance on the road to perfection. Frequent Communion is the panacea for every evil, for every affliction. Jesus is a good companion, to whom we may impart our every joy, success, and happiness.

¹ Decree for Frequent Holy Communion, 20th of Dec. 1905.

The Seminarian

Why, then, is not this custom of daily Communion universal in every seminary and for all seminarians? “Why do so many vain fears keep you away from frequent and daily Communion?”¹ is the name of a little book, which, seemingly, answers all the difficulties which a Catholic can possibly adduce for not receiving Holy Communion daily. In fact there is no difficulty which should keep one from daily Communion except the state of mortal sin, and the want of a proper intention — both of which should be unheard-of in a seminarian.

With the Council of Trent, our holy Father, yes, even Christ Himself almost pleading to let Him help us — “Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you,”² — all urging us to make use of this salutary means of perfection, how can a single seminarian excuse himself from spiritual neglect and sloth if he does not carry out their wish?

A thought of what this Sacrament is must overcome all hesitancy, and attract the heart of the future priest. This Sacrament is

¹ From the Italian by S. Antoni, S.T.D. ² Matt. xi, 28.

The Seminarian

Jesus Christ Himself — the same Jesus Christ who walked upon this earth two thousand years ago. The same Jesus Christ whose representative we wish to be during our own short earthly lives. The same Jesus Christ with whom we wish to associate forever in heaven. “O Lord my God, true God and true man, (Thou) art contained whole and entire under a small form of bread and wine, and without being consumed, art eaten by the receiver!” If this faith is in the soul and love of God fills the heart, frequent Communion is a necessity. If the priestly vocation has been properly understood, if a right conception of its office is ever borne in mind, if it is entered upon because of the love of God and of one’s neighbor, then an intimate friendship with Christ is an indispensable requisite. Hence, it bears repeating; frequent Communion, even daily Communion, is an absolute necessity for an earnest seminarian. St. Francis of Sales says: “Friendship requires an abundant communion or interchange, without which it can neither begin nor continue.”¹ Thus also the friend-

¹ “The Devout Life,” p. 197.

The Seminarian

ship with Christ cannot continue warm and active without the personal communion and interchange made possible by Holy Communion. The thought may arise, is this not exaggeration? Cannot that true friendship be kept up through prayer? The answer must be yes and no. When speaking to God in prayer we speak, as it were, from a distance. We cannot touch Him. But in Holy Communion there is physical contact, there is a union as intimate as any that can exist upon earth. That is why the friendship which is fostered by fervent Holy Communion cannot grow lukewarm and insipid, while that may which consists of prayer alone. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him."¹ The presence of lukewarmness and of Christ together in a soul is contradictory, for He, Himself, says: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth."² Therefore, worthy Communion, that is Holy Communion received in the state of grace and with the proper intention, will, in the end, conquer the luke-

¹ John vi, 57.

² Apocalypse, iii, 16.

The Seminarian

warmness of the receiver and his friendship with the Saviour shall be revived. A prayer, however, said lukewarmly does not overcome the soul's lethargy. "O! the blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that doth not consider so unspeakable a gift." ¹

"Thou oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the fountain of all goodness and all purity, that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices and be made more strong and vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil." ²

"Jesus has not only preserved one Host for us, but hundreds, nay thousands — yes, one for every day of our lives. Do we ever think of that? Jesus has loved us superabundantly. Our Hosts are prepared for us, let us not lose a single one of them." ³ The result of this consideration ought to be frequent Communion, even daily Communion. If you do not receive Him daily, begin now to do so; if this is your habit never

¹ "Following of Christ," Book IV, c. 1.

² *Ibid.*, Book IV, c. 10.

³ Father Eymard.

The Seminarian

desist from so good, so holy, so salutary a practise, and one so pleasing to God.

Real devotion to the Blessed Sacrament does not content itself with frequent reception of Holy Communion. The soul is lured on to other devotions, such as spiritual Communion, and visiting our blessed Saviour in His churches and chapels. The custom prevails in many seminaries in having fixed times for visits to the Blessed Sacrament. For instance, immediately after meals, and whenever leaving and returning to the seminary, be it on business or for recreation. This habit, if assiduously cultivated, will assure its continuance, where possible, in after life, and will be productive of singular blessings from the Tabernacle. These practises are but the natural outgrowths of frequent Holy Communion — the lover wishes to be with his beloved. Hence the soul uses every opportunity of being with Christ, its beloved spouse. Like the bride in the *Cantic of Canticles*, it may say: "In my bed by night I sought Him whom my soul loveth, I sought Him and found Him not. I will rise and go about the city; in the streets

The Seminarian

and the highways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth." And we shall find Him hidden in the recesses of the lonely Tabernacle. How pleasant are these visits to the Blessed Sacrament if we but know how to make them! St. Francis of Sales gives the advice: "We ought to entertain ourselves very familiarly with Our Lord, place our needs before Him, and declare ourselves willing to do whatever He wishes. Let us here consult our Saviour about all our concerns, the important ones as well as the non-important; the grave as well as the small; let us open our hearts to Him and pour ours out into His; let us tell Him of our work, our desires, and our sins; let us confide in Him as in a friend, to whom one entrusts all his concerns, good as well as bad."¹ It is this which Holy Scripture means by the words: "In His sight I pour out my prayer and before Him I declare my trouble."²

The sacrament of Holy Communion, although not essentially, is nevertheless almost inseparably united with that of Penance.

¹ Works of St. Francis of Sales, Vol. III, p. 529.

² Psalm cxli, 3.

The Seminarian

To be able to receive Holy Communion, purity of conscience is required. Therefore, as St. Paul says: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself and so eat of that bread and drink of the chalice."¹ We prove ourselves by Confession. For those who have had the misfortune of falling into mortal sin, Confession is necessary before receiving Holy Communion. And even for those who are not conscious of having committed mortal sin, Confession at least once a week is advisable for frequent Holy Communion. Our endeavor ought to be to have our souls scrupulously pure for the reception of Our Lord. Just as the wayfarer cannot avoid the dust of the road he has to travel, so neither can the fervent Christian avoid entirely the imperfections which arise from human weaknesses. But just as a bath cleanses and refreshes the wayfarer, so also does Confession purify and strengthen the Christian.

The intention in confessing, therefore,

¹ 1 Cor. xi, 27-28.

The Seminarian

must be to cleanse ourselves from sin. This is the primary end of Confession. "Never allow your heart to be long stained with sin, but confess with all humility and devotion every eight days, even if your conscience does not reprove you of grievous sin. Always be sorry for the sins you have to confess, no matter how small they may seem to be to you, and purpose to better yourself, for it is always a great wrong to have offended the infinite goodness of God, who daily gives us so many proofs of His mercy." ¹

St. Francis of Sales also admonishes us to give our confessor a clear understanding of the true state of our consciences, and hence to accuse ourselves of the particular reason why we have committed the sins of which we are guilty. For instance, he writes in the "Introduction to a Devout Life" in the chapter "Of Confession": "You must not accuse yourself of not having prayed to God with as much devotion as you ought; but if you have committed any voluntary distraction, or neglected to choose a proper time or place or posture, requisite for engaging

¹ St. Francis of Sales.

The Seminarian

your attention in prayer, accuse yourself of it, without those general allegations which signify nothing in Confession."

Moreover, it is very beneficial to disclose also our temptations to our confessors. Often these are dissipated by the very acknowledgment of them. Besides, wise and timely advice often helps us to avoid disaster.

Our confessors are one of the most weighty factors in our spiritual life at the seminary. This fact emphasizes the importance of our choice. We should not act hurriedly or haphazardly, but should first pray to the Holy Ghost asking His assistance in making a happy selection and also imploring the grace of God, that we may choose a director who will guide us properly and holily. After the choice has once been made, only a very grave reason ought to urge a change, or counsel our not presenting ourselves to him in any one particular case. Some think that if they have had the very sad misfortune of committing some graver sin they ought to go to some other confessor. This is decidedly erroneous. Because it is just

The Seminarian

such cases that disclose to our Father Confessor our weakness and give him an understanding of our infirmities. Another may be inclined to seek a somewhat lenient confessor. This again is a mistake, for the seminarian's object is to build up a strong religious character, which is possible only when he is directed with a certain severity based upon one principle. What would Our Saviour counsel in this case?

It often happens that during a period of seminary life, the young aspirant for the priesthood is tried by a time of scrupulosity. Almighty God sometimes allows this trial in order to purify the soul from prevalent faults, or to urge the soul on to greater sanctity, or to probe whether the virtue of the soul be genuine. These periods of scrupulousness are very trying. And then, if ever, is felt the need of a good confessor. These rules may be set down as certain. If this trial comes from God it will not last for a long time, and the one remedy is absolute and determined obedience to the guide of our souls. The confessor cannot cure. The cure must be effected by the scrupulous

The Seminarian

person himself, and the only method is strict adherence to the confessor's directions.

With this trial, and even when there is no scrupulousness, often come periods of spiritual dryness. It seems then as if God had withdrawn Himself from us entirely. Following hard on this is the temptation to give up all prayer, all religious exercises, sometimes even one's chosen vocation. Here again the confessor is of great advantage. His wise counsel, his encouragement and direction halt the many rash determinations which may be formed at such times. If you could but understand that God allows, as a rule, such trials intermittently throughout your whole life, you would experience less difficulty and less spiritual harm in passing through the arid land of desolation. When suffering from spiritual dryness, "Go to your confessor, opening to him the several plaits and folds of your soul; follow his advice with the utmost simplicity and humility; for God, who is well pleased with obedience, frequently renders the counsels we take from others, but especially from those who are the guides of our souls, profit-

The Seminarian

able when otherwise there might be no great appearance of success. . . . In the midst of our spiritual dryness let us never lose courage, but wait with patience for the return of consolation. Let us not omit any of our exercises of devotion, but if possible let us multiply our good works.”¹

Such confidence in and obedience to a prudent confessor will pilot the seminarian through the shoals, and be of advantage to himself, as well as to those whom, later on, he will direct. For thus and thus only shall he become experienced in the wonderful secrets of spiritual life, and learn how God uses these very trials for the furtherance of sanctity and to His own greater honor and glory.

The Sacrament of Penance is one of the best means of acquiring perfection. Hence the importance of always making a good Confession. It should not be done through force of habit alone, but with care and attention; even though venial sins are the matter for Confession, the Confession should not be lightly made.

¹ St. Francis of Sales: “Devout Life.” Of Spiritual Dryness.

The Seminarian

It is always a sacrament, therefore it should be received with seriousness, earnestness, and reverence. Father Noldin says: "They who ordinarily confess only venial sins cannot be sufficiently advised to conceive a true sorrow and a firm purpose of amendment for one or the other venial sin which especially troubles them. The more universal the purpose to avoid venial sin, the less efficacious it is. Ordinarily it would be better not to confess such venial sins for which the penitent has no sorrow nor purpose of amendment." ¹

The object of Confession is to cleanse the soul from sin, to gain grace and strength for the future, and to obtain direction. Consequently these aims must be borne in mind, and the Confession made accordingly. True and sincere sorrow is an essential requisite, also prayer and earnestness, and finally an honest disclosing of the state of the conscience, in order to receive proper admonitions and instructions on the way to perfection. Made thus, Confession is a real boon, a stay against sin and imprudence,

¹ Noldin, Sac. p. 309.

The Seminarian

a source of consolation and joy, a help and blessing of priceless value.

There is a time set aside each day in the life of a seminarian for spiritual reading. Spiritual reading, as a retreat-master once so beautifully said, "is a letter from God to the reader."¹ It is "the oil of the lamp of prayer." Good reading is to the soul what good food is to the body. It is so important that, in the opinion of the above-quoted retreat-master, if either spiritual reading or the meditation must be unavoidably omitted, it were better to omit the meditation and make the spiritual reading. The reason for this preference is: In meditation we speak to God. In spiritual reading, God speaks to us.

A recent article on spiritual reading says: "Spiritual reading is the reading of a spiritual book. A spiritual book, however, is one which seeks to further nourish and strengthen the inner life, the supernatural life of virtue, the life of Christian perfection. It must have a supernatural foundation, and be based upon the teaching and example of the in-

¹ P. H. Noldin, S.J.

The Seminarian

carnate Son of God, and upon the doctrines of the Catholic Church; it must not merely describe Christian perfection, but attract the reader to it, and win him for a life pleasing to God, as do, for instance, the Gospel, the 'Following of Christ,' 'An Introduction to a Devout Life,' by St. Francis of Sales, etc." ¹

The manner of reading is also worthy of attention. He who reads only through curiosity, without humility, without the desire to benefit by the reading, will gain nothing, even from the best of books. Spiritual reading should be for us a time spent with Christ, like the time spent by Mary at His feet, drinking in His love, an understanding for spiritual things, a knowledge of the ways of God. Read, therefore, in this spirit: "Never read anything that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise." "Attend to My words," Our Lord is quoted as saying in the "Following of Christ," "which inflame the heart and enlighten the mind, which excite to compunction and afford manifold consolations." "Woe to them

¹ Translation from "Der Sendbote," Nov. 1913.

The Seminarian

that inquire of men after many curious things, and are little curious of the way to serve Me. I am He that in an instant elevates a humble mind, to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth, than could be acquired by ten years' study in the schools. The voice of the books is the same but teaches all men not alike, because I within am the teacher of truth, the searcher of the heart, the understander of thoughts, the promoter of actions; distributing to every one as I judge fit." The manner in which we read, therefore, should be with a view to promote, nourish, and strengthen our own spiritual lives. Not so much to learn, as St. Bernard suggests, but rather to taste the sweetness of God.

Seek to ground yourselves in the spiritual life, and you will have no difficulty later in helping others do likewise. "*Nemo dat quod non habet*," applies here also.

The supply of literature for spiritual reading is inexhaustible, but such books as the Bible, the "Following of Christ," the "Devout Life" by St. Francis of Sales, the "Spiritual Combat" by Scupoli, the works

The Seminarian

of Father Faber and St. Alphonsus ought to be familiar to every aspirant to the priesthood.

St. Vincent of Paul admonishes his priests to read a chapter of the New Testament every day, and to venerate this book as the rule of Christian perfection; further, that this reading be more efficacious, he enjoins that it be read on bended knees and that, at the end of the reading, these acts be performed: 1st, Adoration of the truths contained in the chapter; 2d, Reception of them in the spirit of Christ and His saints; and 3d, Resolution to follow the counsels and commands therein contained, and to imitate the examples. Such reading will surely be productive of spiritual fruit.

To read the Bible every day, and to supplement this by a short space of time devoted to some other spiritual book, will keep the life of the soul in bloom. There is no room for dryness where the soul is daily nourished with new thoughts, or old thoughts are revived. Dryness, therefore, is the soul's lack of nourishment — and it is due to the omission of spiritual reading. Let the

The Seminarian

rule prevail: no day without its spiritual reading.

Another of the works of piety prescribed for the seminarian's daily practise is the examination of conscience. There are two kinds of examinations of conscience, a general and a particular one. The former consists in reviewing the actions of the day, and recalling to mind the faults and offenses committed against the various commands of God and the Church, as well as the duties of our state of life. The latter is an examination as to the number of times we have failed against a certain virtue which we have wished to acquire, or the number of times we have performed acts of this virtue.

"The children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. They attend carefully to their own business, they examine their expenditures and receipts, they have a periodic taking of stock, they make up their accounts with the help of an auditor, they grieve over losses, they arrange plans and precautions for future exigencies. But we, the children of light, show ourselves more anxious for honors and

The Seminarian

emoluments than for holiness . . . we rarely explore our hearts — self-introspection is too troublesome, too disagreeable, too practical; like the lazy man in the Book of Proverbs, we allow the spiritual vineyard to be covered over with thorns and nettles; we never consider how retrograde we are in our piety; we never weep over our follies; we do not strive from day to day to root some sinful tendency out of our hearts.”¹

The banker balances his accounts each day, and knows, each evening, the financial standing of his business. Is it not as important to know one's spiritual standing each evening, in the all-important business of one's own salvation and spiritual advancement? The neglect of this important duty has one bad result: the seminarian will not have a proper sense of sin, will not be sincerely humble. “He may be Christian on the surface and pagan in the heart.” For this reason Pope Pius X recommended self-examination so forcibly in his “*Exhortatio ad clerum*.” Every night, therefore, an earnest examination of conscience should

¹ “The Priest of To-Day.” O'Donnell, p. 14.

The Seminarian

be made. It need not be long. A few moments will suffice for review. "In the morning you reflect on your range of duties, and resolve to acquit yourself faithfully of them. In the examination you inquire whether and how you have discharged them. In the morning you survey the field before you, and determine to advance with steady steps. At night you look back and contemplate how much ground you have covered. Happy are they whose time is thus regulated. Full days shall be found in them."¹ To know our faults, however, is not sufficient. We must sincerely grieve for having committed them, and seek to avoid them on the following day. "No one is born who is entirely exempt from faults; the best is he who has the fewest," says St. Jerome. Accordingly an endeavor must be made always to lessen the number of these faults.

The particular examination, too, should have daily attention. No one earnestly striving for spiritual perfection will succeed without this practise. Even a man like

¹ "The Ambassador of Christ," p. 46. Cardinal Gibbons.

The Seminarian

Benjamin Franklin realized this. In his autobiography he writes: "I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time, and to conquer all that either natural inclinations, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my attention was taken up and care employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was too strong for reason. I concluded at length that the mere speculative conviction, that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct."

He then goes on to tell how he chose for acquirement the thirteen moral virtues of

[66]

The Seminarian

temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, and humility.

“My intention,” he writes, “being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and when I should be master of that, proceed to another; and so on until I should have gone through the thirteen.”

What is this other than the daily particular examen of conscience? Any one striving for Christian perfection must come to the same conclusion that Franklin arrived at — that one fault after the other must be eliminated from the heart, and replaced by their opposite virtues. Hence the recommendation of St. Ignatius: “1. In the morning, on rising, resolve to avoid a certain sin or defect, preferably that which arises from the predominant passion. 2. At noon ask of God the grace to remember how often you have fallen into it, and avoid it for the future. Then examine, thinking over the

The Seminarian

time passed since your rising to this time, the number of faults committed," making note of the number in some book kept for the purpose. This done renew your resolutions for the rest of the day. 3. In the evening after supper, make a new examination like the first,"¹ again noting the number of faults.

This process ought be continued daily until the fault is banished, after which we may proceed to another fault. When we have succeeded in removing the more prominent failings, the virtues may be taken up, and the number of acts of a certain virtue proposed for acquirement may be noted until there is a habit of this virtue in the soul. This is truly the science of the saints, and is productive of spiritual wealth which the moth hath not power to consume nor the elements to rust, but which will be laid up for the happy possessor in heaven.

To ground the seminarian in piety there is also the so-called "*recollectio menstrua*" — a monthly balance sheet, we might term it. Its purpose is briefly to glance over the past

¹ "Spiritual Exercises," published by Burns & Oates.

The Seminarian

month, on some set day each month, to review the progress, or to halt the retrogression if any. The custom of forming a few good practical resolutions for the month and of examining how these have been kept is recommended. These, too, should be noted. Some scheme to bring these often to mind during the month ought be invented. There was a seminarian who wrote his resolutions in a manner intelligible only to himself, and placed them over his washstand in order to catch a glimpse of them each day. A practise singular, but effective.

A word must also be said of retreats. Some seminaries have one annually, others have shorter ones two or three times a year. St. Ignatius calls a retreat spiritual exercises. What exercise is for the body a retreat is for the soul. It strengthens the soul after the wear and tear occasioned by the trials and difficulties, temptations and sins, which have occurred since the last retreat. It builds up the soul with energy and courage for new endeavors. It banishes disease and gives new life. A retreat is, therefore, always useful, and to those of good will always

The Seminarian

fruitful of good results. It is to fulfil the admonition of St. Paul: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind: And put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."¹ How to make a good retreat is beyond the sphere of this book to answer. To make it earnestly, seriously, and with a view to pleasing God and to benefit one's own soul hardly needs urging. These periodical retreats are considered so important for seminarians that all other work of the seminary ceases for the time to give attention to this. Priestly characters are made by a good retreat. Priestly characters are spoiled by the neglect of a good retreat. They are the extraordinary times of grace, when Christ becomes the teacher for each individual seminarian.

"Whosoever, therefore, aims at arriving at internal and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, go aside from the crowd."² In order to lay a foundation for that true piety which must sustain the priest throughout his life,

¹ Eph. iv, 23, 24.

² "Following of Christ," Book III, c. 20.

The Seminarian

it is absolutely necessary for one to retire into himself from time to time, and adopt principles which will guide and guard him throughout his career. This work is pre-eminently wrought in the soul of the future priest during the times of retreat. Wherefore the "Following of Christ" advises: "Choose a secret place to thyself; love to dwell with thyself alone; seek not to be talking with any one; but rather pour forth devout prayers to God, that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction, and thy conscience clean. . . . Thus the heart is made susceptible to religious principles. . . . 'For thou canst not both attend to Me,' Christ is quoted as saying, 'and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things. Thou must be sequestered from thy acquaintance and from those who are near to thee, and keep thy mind disengaged from all temporal comfort.'" ¹ Such opportunity is afforded by a retreat. If the retreat is considered in this light, the earnest aspirant to the priesthood will not make little of it, but will see in it the special grace of God

¹ Following of Christ," Book III, c. 53.

The Seminarian

for him, the means of spiritual progress as well as the source of spiritual treasures.

The special devotions of the Church are various and manifold. They are suited to the character of the times and of each individual. All are good. Some are more suited to one class of individuals than to another. Because of the abundance of these devotions, not all may be practised by a single person, and each one chooses such as appeal more strongly to his inclination and taste. "In selecting devotions we must not supplant what is essential, nor unduly multiply what is merely accidental."¹ There are two, however, which must be fostered by every priest. They are a fervent devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and a tender affection for His Blessed Mother.

The famous moralist, Father H. Noldin, says of the devotion to the Sacred Heart: "The candidate for the priesthood who understands and practises this devotion, will surely acquire the sacerdotal spirit and the characteristic virtues of the priesthood as preparation for Holy Orders. He possesses

¹ O'Donnell: "The Priest of To-Day."

The Seminarian

in this devotion a certain means of preserving and guarding the spirit of his calling throughout life.”¹

From the Sacred Heart of Jesus the seminarian imbibes that zeal for the salvation of souls which is the keystone of a good priestly life. “Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” Jesus wishes His future priests especially to imitate Him. In the first seminary He was the teacher. The zeal of the Apostles was kindled by the Sacred Heart.

Again in His revelations to the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque He promised to priests who honor His Sacred Heart, grace to convert hardened sinners. Since those devotions, which are of benefit not only for himself but also for those who are to receive his priestly ministrations, are best suited to the priest, it is evident that devotion to the Sacred Heart is admirably adapted to the aspirant to the priesthood. It inflames the heart of the priest with burning love for God, and brings advantages for those under his charge. “When the priest

¹ Noldin, “Die Andacht zum heiligsten Herzen Jesu.”

The Seminarian

is kindled with the fire of the Sacred Heart, his people, too, will walk in a great light," says Cardinal Manning.

The Apostleship of Prayer in honor of the Sacred Heart was founded by Father Gantrelet, the superior of the Scholastics of the Society of Jesus at Vals. In an exhortation held on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, he urged the young religious to begin their apostolic work even before they were priests, by offering to the Sacred Heart of Jesus their prayers, works, and studies for the conversion of unbelievers and for the furtherance of the interests of holy Mother Church. From the seminary this practise passed to the laity, and is now spread over the whole world.

Thus every seminarian may begin his priestly activity before he has received Orders. This practise will not only gain grace for those for whom he performs it, but will undoubtedly also gain grace for those who will later come in contact with him so that their hearts shall be prepared and made receptive for his priestly ministrations.

The Seminarian

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is intimately connected with the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, hence all that is said of the Blessed Sacrament may be applied also to the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The priest is termed the "*alter Christus*." If he be the "*alter Christus*" he must have the Blessed Virgin Mary as his spiritual Mother. It is a natural trait of every good child to love his mother. It is a natural craving of the human heart, which manifests itself in the infant as well as in the man of mature years. This tender affection in the layman is weaned at least in part in later years and given to his wife and children, although his mother is never forgotten or neglected. Similarly, the priest must have some one on whom he may lavish his affection. This person, for the priest, is none other than his spiritual Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the light of this fact we can understand the childlike, tender, and sincere devotion that such saints as St. Bernard, or St. Alphonsus Liguori, had for the Blessed Virgin.

Have you ever observed the child? Have

The Seminarian

you observed the confidence and trust he places in his mother? If he needs help he immediately cries for his mother; if he desires anything he goes to his mother; clinging to the skirts of his mother he feels secure, no matter what danger may threaten him.

Such was the attitude of the saints toward their heavenly mother. They surely resemble the children, whom we in our turn must resemble in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. If they needed grace they hastened to the Blessed Mother. If they needed help to accomplish anything, to gain a virtue, to do a good work, they turned to their spiritual Mother. They knew full well that she would not refuse what an earthly mother would surely give if it were in her power.

The priest who has but little devotion to the Blessed Virgin, is in great danger of placing his affections on unworthy objects and even on sinful ones. The natural cravings of the heart will be satisfied. The best policy, therefore, is to direct them toward the proper channels. And what more worthy

The Seminarian

object of affection, besides almighty God, is there than the Blessed Mother of God? He who wishes Christ for his brother must have the Blessed Virgin Mary for his mother. "Oh, blessed is he who clings with love and confidence to those two anchors of salvation, Jesus and Mary! He certainly will not be lost."

The seminarian must, therefore, cultivate and foster a tender and childlike love for his Blessed Mother. He ought to accustom himself to saying the rosary each day, without fail. He ought to appeal to her in his trials and difficulties. He ought daily to recommend to her safe-keeping the purity of his heart and soul. He ought to be a member of her sodality and wear her badge of honor, the scapular. Like St. Stanislaus he ought to feel his heart grow warm in pronouncing her praises, or in hearing them. Fortunate the priest who has Mary for his mother. She will be a true mother to every one who strives to be her true child.

CHAPTER IV

Obedience, Internal, as a means of Self-denial · Silence · Special Rules: Rising and Retiring, Sickness, Finances, Debts · Use of Time · Visits Vacations · Student Officials Students and Authorities · Sundry Rules

CARDINAL MANNING writes: "A priest is, above all, a *vir obedientiarum*, a man of many obediences." If this be true of the priest, how much more so is it true of the seminarian. While at the seminary the aspirant to the priesthood leads a life similar to that of a religious. As obedience is one of the necessary factors for a religious' life, so also for the seminarian.

Obedience is first of all, and above all, a virtue. For this reason it ought to be embraced and observed by the seminarian. As

[79]

The Seminarian

a virtue it is a means of bringing him nearer almighty God and of adorning his soul with a quality pleasing to almighty God.

“To obey because we must, to obey for fear of penalties and censures is not enough,” says Cardinal Manning. “We ought to obey rather from a motive of virtue, in imitation of Christ, who ‘was obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.’”¹ Obedient to His heavenly Father, obedient also to Mary and Joseph, who were far below Him in dignity, but to whom, nevertheless, “He was subject”² because such was His Father’s will.

For the good of the community obedience is absolutely necessary in every seminary. Without obedience there can be no order, and order is heaven’s first law. This fact is recognized by all, and hence the seminarian comes to the seminary with the knowledge that he must obey the rules in force. “Many are under obedience more out of necessity than for the love of God; and such as these are in pain, and easily repine. Nor will they gain freedom of mind unless they submit

¹ Phil. ii, 8.

² Luke ii, 51.

The Seminarian

themselves with their whole heart for God's sake." ¹ An obedience offered merely for the sake of getting along, or to escape reprimand and reproof, is certainly not the obedience proper for a seminarian. His obedience dare not only be external, but must be internal, without complaint, murmur, or displeasure. His obedience must be sincere; hence in public, as well as in private, when observed as well as when alone and unobserved, his obedience must be extended not only to his superiors in dignity and rank, but even to his equals, provided they have authority to command. All this is possible only when obedience is practised as a virtue with the motive of pleasing almighty God.

It must be borne in mind that the rules and regulations of a seminary are not intended to be a torture for the individual, but rather to be an aid for the acquiring of necessary virtues. They are part of a training on which depend gravity of mind, modesty, prudence, kindness, zeal, brotherly love, and the many other virtues which ornament the clerical as well as the social life of the priest.

¹ "Following of Christ," c. ix.

The Seminarian

These rules and regulations may also be a means of practising penance and self-denial. Penances such as fasting and the use of the discipline are not exacted from the seminarian, but a penance which is expected from every one is the self-denial required by the faithful observance of the rules. To observe rules out of a spirit of self-denial is to build up one's character.

Under the caption of "Priesthood of a Half-Trained Youth," the following note may be found in the "Appendix," of "The Priest of To-day" by Father Thomas O'Donnell, C.M. I quote it at length, for unless it be embodied in the context it may not be read:

"What, then, must be the danger of the priesthood to the shallow and half-trained youth who has never looked seriously into the failings and weakness of his own heart? There is perhaps little fault to find with him during the years of his studies. He obeys, he works fairly well, he is not outwardly greedy or selfish; he keeps his place in the ranks, in the routine, neither very conspicuous for zeal nor very notable for remissness. All this is compatible with feeble virtue.

The Seminarian

His life does not call upon his virtue. His character and nature are such that he prefers to march along in the routine rather than to risk discomfort by making any fight for his own convenience.

“His position in a seminary is perhaps, an easier one than he would have had in the world. To put off the ‘ignominy of the secular habit’ has to him not been a sacrifice, but a relief. He has, as yet, not felt any keen trouble, or had to face any heavy cross. Whilst he obeys, therefore, it is rather through easiness of temper, than any supernatural principle; whilst he works it is because it would never do to imperil his ordination by failing in his studies; whilst he leads a regular life, it is rather out of custom than holy mortification; and whilst he lives at peace with his companions, it is rather because it is troublesome and stupid to quarrel than because he loves the souls for which Christ died.

“When a youth like this is ordained — and he cannot be refused ordination — the trouble begins. He was all right in the harbor — behind the breakwater. But the

The Seminarian

waves of the great world, and even those disturbances that find their way into a little congregation, a small cure for souls, will try him and search him. First comes the tendency to take things easy, now that he is more or less his own master. He has never really learned and studied self-denial, which is at the root of Christian life, and therefore he is at once drawn to a score of different kinds of self-indulgence, to shortening his prayers, to irregularity in hours, to reading novels and newspapers, and to the study of his comfort in eating, sleeping, etc. He has never really got down to what humility is; and therefore success elates him; the miserable flattery of the ignorant pleases him, a rebuke or even a piece of advice hurts him, and any little failure makes him wretched. He has practised, let us hope, the holy virtue of purity, but he has never penetrated what is meant by worldliness; he has never understood that free and unrestrained intercourse with men and women, and the finding of one's pleasure in worldly amusements and worldly ways, are as dangerous to purity of heart as the malaria of an African

The Seminarian

coast is to the body; and therefore he soon begins to grow worldly in manner, in words, in dress, in occupation; he finds society pleasant, and it need not be the highest and most refined society either; he loses his time in unpriestly recreations; he forms friendships; he yields to the pleasure that he finds in the company of women; perhaps he burns his fingers, is laughed at, and learns a lesson; perhaps things go further, and the poor, weak, and foolish young man causes a scandal and becomes an apostate.”¹

Had he conscientiously observed the rules of the seminary, yes, out of a spirit of self-denial had he scrupulously observed them, with but one motive, that of obedience, in order to please almighty God, he would have formed a character sufficiently strong to steer him safely. These shoals and rocks of the sea of life would be less likely to cause his destruction and ruin. Not mere external obedience is enough, but an obedience which springs from virtue, and which must be deeply embedded in the heart.

Silence is one of the requisites of every

¹ “*Lex Levitarum*,” Hedley.

The Seminarian

seminary. It is necessary in order to foster piety. It is necessary for earnest application to study. It conduces to peace of mind and hinders sin. "He who abounds in words injures his own soul," says Holy Scripture. Silence must, therefore, be religiously observed at all times, except during recreation. Not merely for the reason that offenders will be reprimanded, but from the religious motive of self-denial, and from the conviction that it is necessary for spiritual progress as well as for solid erudition. "Whosoever aims at arriving at internal and spiritual things must, with Jesus, go aside from the crowd."¹ "In much speech there shall not be wanting sin," Holy Scripture assures us.

Useless conversations, and such as are engaged in out of the proper time, are a source of distraction from spiritual thoughts, besides being a hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge. "If thou withdraw thyself from superfluous talk and idle visits, as also from giving ear to news and reports, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to employ thyself in good meditations."² After study

¹ "Following of Christ," Book I, c. 20.

² "Following of Christ," Book I, c. 20.

The Seminarian

the thoughts and ideas proposed must be pondered on, so that being well understood, they may sink deep in the memory. Becoming thus part of one's self, they may be stored away for future use.

Idle visits and "news-munching" are, therefore, positively injurious. Injurious to piety because they are distracting and a source of sin. He who does not offend with the tongue is a perfect man, says St. James. "As often as I have been among men, I have returned less a man,"¹ to which Thomas à Kempis adds: "It is easier to be altogether silent, than not to exceed in words." Detraction, disputes, quarrels, breaches of charity, all follow in the wake of useless visits and unguarded conversations.

Hence the rule of silence and that prohibiting visiting are not only useful, but essential for such as are earnestly endeavoring to acquire true piety and knowledge. Furthermore, they are a means of self-conquest. They will train the individual for that important duty in the life of a priest, when he is tempted to speak of matters and persons,

¹ "Seneca Epistola vii."

The Seminarian

and where prudence counsels silence. If the priest does not acquire this habit during his preparatory years he will rarely acquire it later. A president of a seminary often repeated: "We seldom become better than we were at the seminary." So, if self-conquest is not gained now, few will afterward attain it.

Each seminary has its own special rules and regulations, adapted to its own particular needs. These may be treated in a general manner. There is a fixed time for rising and retiring. Aside from supernatural motives, observance of this rule is required for the good order of the house, as well as for the good health of the student. The well-known sayings that too much sleep makes one dull, and too little makes one nervous, are well founded in fact. Some may not scruple to curtail the time apportioned for rest, by either rising before the appointed time or not retiring at the hour fixed by rule. This is a fault as grave as its opposite of spending too much time in rest. An insufficient amount of sleep is always detrimental to health and the bad effects resulting from it,

The Seminarian

if not noticed immediately, will be felt later. The time apportioned by rule will be found sufficient, but also necessary, in order to preserve health and vigorous mental activity. Accordingly, neither more nor less time ought be appropriated for this purpose without express orders from a physician and without permission of the superior.

This last remark suggests another set of rules, namely, for those who may become sick. Illness should be reported, and when necessary a physician should be summoned. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Health is an asset for the priest which is not to be underestimated. The priest broken in health is often useless to the community for whom he is to labor and because of his infirmity, he often becomes a burden to himself as well as others. Hence any ailment detected at the seminary must be attended to so as not to be aggravated by neglect. If incurable the advisability of giving up the priestly calling should be seriously considered. The honor and glory of God, as well as one's own spiritual and temporal welfare, require this.

The Seminarian

Be it well understood that a weakly constitution does not always counsel the termination of priestly studies, for many of the saints, despite this disadvantage, accomplished an almost incredible amount of good for the glory of God and the welfare of their fellows. Such as may be affected in this manner need only take counsel of earnest, God-fearing men, and follow their decision. Should the priest be debarred from active work, there is still much that he can do which will be of great honor to almighty God. A retreat-master once said that in his opinion a young priest, prevented by sickness from doing any more than saying his first Mass, would accomplish as much, by his perfect act of resignation to the will of God, as a less fervent priest in active service for the care of souls. The will of God, therefore, must be looked to, the will of God must be the solution of the question, and form the principle which actuates a decision.

During sickness the patient ought to make an earnest effort to be resigned. It is misguided zeal and often impatience to regret the seeming loss of time, or the inability to do

The Seminarian

service to God and our neighbor while sick. St. Francis of Sales is a beautiful example of true resignation. He is quoted as saying in time of sickness: "God knows better than I do what is best for me; let Him do as He chooses, He is the Lord; let Him do what is most pleasing to His will. O God, let Thy will be done, not mine. Yes, my heavenly Father, I will it because it has been found well in Thy presence. I will it so, O my Lord, and may Thy law and Thy will be forever engraven in my heart."

In sickness there are opportunities of practising many virtues besides patience and resignation. There are obedience and holy indifference, all of which so beautifully fit the soul for the future functions of the priesthood. The same St. Francis was exemplary in all of these. When asked if he would take medicine or a little broth or any other remedy, he would invariably answer: "Do with the sick what you think best. God has put me in the hands of physicians." He gave an exact statement of his sickness, neither exaggerating it by excessive complaints, nor underrating it by dissimulation. He called

The Seminarian

the first cowardice, the latter insincerity. Sickness borne in such a spirit can but prove a powerful aid in character-building, as well as in virtue-building for the future priest. Moreover, one who has endured such trials in his own person will develop a spirit of kindness and sympathy, a valuable gift indeed in his sacred ministry. The rules to be followed, therefore, are to take proper means to protect one's health, and when sick to use the means to restore health. State the symptoms sincerely. Obey the orders of the physician conscientiously — and leave the rest to almighty God.

Apropos of this subject Father O'Donnell quotes in his book: — "While, however, taking reasonable care of one's health, one must guard against the mischievous error of over-solicitude. The habit that so often grows upon men with slight chronic maladies, or feeble temperament, or idle lives, of making their own health and their own ailments the constant subject of their thoughts, soon becomes a disease very fatal to happiness, and positively injurious to health."¹ "I

¹ "The Priest of To-Day," p. 103.

The Seminarian

firmly believe," says a prominent physician, "that one-half of the confirmed invalids of to-day could be cured of their maladies if they were compelled to live active lives and had no time to fret over their miseries. . . . Those who desire to live should settle this well in their minds — that nerve power is the force of life." ¹

To my best knowledge most seminaries have no set rule regulating the private financial affairs of the student. These matters are considered personal, and yet wise and prudent supervision cannot but be beneficial here, especially from a pedagogical viewpoint.

When he enters the seminary, the young man, as a rule, is thrown for the first time upon his own resources in the management of his financial affairs. He is master of his allowance without supervision, and he makes his expenditures wisely or imprudently, according to his natural traits. Some are born financiers, others must be made such. Every secular priest must be a good business manager. It is the material part of the

¹ Lecky: "Map of Life."

The Seminarian

sacred ministry which under present circumstances cannot be eradicated from priestly life.

Where shall the candidate for the priesthood be trained to prudence in making expenditures, to generosity to thwart avariciousness, to sparing and saving to check prodigality? It is at the seminary, in the management of his own financial accounts. "But if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"¹

It is wise to keep a cash-book even at the seminary to note receipts and expenditures. The purpose of this is not so much because of the number of financial transactions, but rather to acquire a habit which will be useful. It has the additional advantage of showing black on white what the money received during the time went for. This little book ought to be balanced monthly.

A glance at its pages will often show how uselessly money has been spent. The error will soon be discovered of buying a priest's library at the seminary. One ought always

¹ 1 Tim. iii, 5.

The Seminarian

to have the books necessary for present use, but books intended for future use are best left unbought during these preparatory years. Many books acquired thus early are never read. Moreover, when a book is recommended as valuable in connection with one's text-book, it is not always intended that the book should be bought. These works may usually be had at the seminary library. The remark of St. Francis of Sales is quite to the point. He was wont to say: "To study well it was necessary to read only one book, and those who skip over many scarcely ever profit by their readings." Hence, to procure a large library at the seminary, although a common fault, is unnecessary and often imprudent. It were much better to note good books, which have been recommended, and to procure them when there is time and opportunity to read them.

Merchants know that the clergy are honest, and therefore many articles are offered for sale at prices and upon terms which seem attractive. This is another source of temptation to the uninitiated, and they purchase articles that they will never use. The rule

The Seminarian

to follow ought to be: first, buy what is necessary, then what may be useful, and only then, if funds permit, those things which may be classed as among the luxuries.

To pay one's lawful debts and to pay them promptly is a very important duty also for students. Among the rules of a certain seminary is the following: "All smaller purchases of a dollar or less must be paid at once. Larger accounts must be settled no later than February in the first term, and no later than June in the second term. Receipts must be preserved for one year. Such as may not be able to meet their obligations at the above-stated times must report this fact to the President of the Seminary.

"Should any one not be able to settle his accounts by the close of the school year, he must report this fact to the President, who, according to his own good judgment, may demand a security for the creditors." The rules are intended primarily to secure outside creditors, not the seminary, and to protect the good reputation of the house. The seminarian has the obligation of training

The Seminarian

himself in financial matters, even if he commands unlimited means, in order in after life to be able to prudently and conscientiously manage church funds.

A fault more common than the mismanagement of funds is the mismanagement of time. The seminarian is practically the absolute master of that time which is not employed in the lecture hall, in the spiritual exercises in common, and the general recreations. The hours spent in his room are his own. Misappropriation here is as evil as misappropriation of funds. This time is intended for study.

Some may be inclined to misuse this leisure for other purposes. Others have a few hours remaining at their disposal even after conscientious study. How should this be occupied? One thing is certain — the moments wasted are irrevocably lost.

Much is lost because of lack of order. Many lose precious minutes in deciding what subject should be attacked first. Even in the arrangement of the work we intend to accomplish during a certain period a plan ought to be outlined. The student who has

The Seminarian

a specified hour for each branch of study is the one who will make the greatest progress. "Let all things be done decently and according to order."¹ It is not wise to work haphazard. Studying one subject until it becomes tedious, and then taking up another, is certainly ill-advised. A time for everything, everything in its time, is the rule which must prevail. A fixed hour should be had for the study of dogmatic theology, another for moral, and so on with all the subjects of the curriculum. If there is an hour left, profane literature, or languages, must not be omitted. But here the same rule must govern — first the necessary, then the useful, only in the last place the pleasant.

Some will claim that they still have moments of leisure after having observed all of the above. If this be the case, let them undertake some private study, or some work which will be of use in after-life. Such studying or writing may not be completed in the seminary, but there will be an impetus to continue it in the years of the priesthood. There is always an abundance of work to

¹ 1 Cor. xiv, 40.

The Seminarian

occupy one's leisure, but often a lack of initiative or energy to undertake it. The advice of St. Francis of Sales is to the point in this regard. He says: "To give scope to the activity of the mind, we ought to form designs as great as if we had a long life before us, but not reckon on doing more than if we had to die to-morrow."

Often, too, there are a few moments of time, which, due to circumstances, may not be used to advantage for serious study. Wise men have found a way of utilizing these. One priest always had a book on hand, to which he would resort at such times. He had a copy of the same book in his study, in his office, and in his dining-room, so as to have it wherever he might be. In this manner he was enabled to read much which otherwise he would never have had time for.

Man, a social being, needs association with his fellowman. A visit at the proper time and place may be an act of Christian charity, but it is most important that the proper time and place be observed. A seminary is the dwelling of a community of students, therefore it is evident that a visitor

The Seminarian

should be seen and entertained in a place where his presence will not prove an annoyance to others. Consideration for others would prompt such a rule of conduct. Visitors ought never be received elsewhere than in the room set aside for this purpose. The student's room is not a reception room, but rather his workroom. Hence, except on rare occasions, and only for most intimate friends, would a visit to the student's own room be tolerable — and then only with at least the tacit consent and approval of the President of the seminary.

Visits should be short. Too long contact with the outer world brings dissipation. The concerns, worries, and pleasures of the world are discussed, all of which have a tendency to disturb the equilibrium of mind and heart, so valuable an asset for the training of a good seminarian.

“As often as I have been among men I have returned less a man.”¹ “It is easier to keep retired at home, than to be able to be sufficiently upon one's guard abroad.”²

¹ Seneca Epis. 7.

² “Following of Christ,” c. 20.

The Seminarian

These ought to be the principles which should prompt the cleric to prefer retirement, rather than the receiving or paying of many visits. "*Qui multum ambuletur raro sanctificetur.*" To leave the seminary to pay a visit without permission of the proper authorities is an offence which may not lightly be condoned. "*Scis illos esse dignos?*" is the question put to authorities on the day of ordination. "Do you know that these young men are worthy to be raised to the dignity of the priesthood?" How shall the authorities know, unless they have had the young man under vigilant observation at home and abroad, unless they know his friends and companions? "Tell me who your companions are and I will tell you what you are," is an old and reliable proverb.

The proper time, too, must be observed. A visit out of the hour allotted for such purpose tends to disturb the order of the day as well as to destroy one's recollections for spiritual exercises and studies. Only if a weighty reason counsels such a course of action may the student justify himself in obtaining permission to visit or receive a

The Seminarian

visit out of the time specified by the seminary rules. We are being trained to be priests who must live in the world, but who are not of the world. Social beings in the world, we are required to pay and receive visits; not being of the world let our visits always have a justifying motive, either for our own reasonable recreation or for the good of others.

Also the students are accountable to the seminary authorities for their conduct during the vacations. Superiors are bound to exercise vigilance in this regard, and this vigilance is so important a duty that the Third Council of Baltimore (n. 177) enjoins that the seminary authorities receive from the pastor in whose parish the young man resides a written report on the conduct of the cleric during the vacations. The vacations are the test of the genuineness of the piety as well as of the vocation of a young man. His conduct is under surveillance, it is true, but this is so superficial that he is practically his own master. A seminarian must possess nobility of character, and his conduct must be correct and blameless

The Seminarian

whether observed or not. His chosen Master is always present, and the thought of Him must ever be in his mind, now to prompt him to fulfil his duties, again to deter him from doing what might reflect on the life he has chosen. His calling requires the state of celibacy, hence the company of young women is not for him. Aside from being dangerous, such company is unbecoming for one with such high aspirations. Nevertheless, he is always to act as a gentleman, and therefore will conduct himself in the presence of any lady as he would in the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and will be as courteous to all as the rules of politeness and good breeding require. Familiarity and the exchange of confidences he will avoid, however.

His male companions, also, must be above reproach. The unsavory repute of any doubtful character attaches itself to his associates. His recreation must be open, at proper times, and in respectable places. We said before that during the vacation time he is not watched. This is true. The seminary authorities and his pastor may not

The Seminarian

be watching him, but the eyes of the community in which he lives are upon him, and they are shrewd observers. Late hours, and places, which in themselves may not be sinful, but which are unbecoming for an aspirant to the priesthood, will have to be avoided — for the people demand that not even the suspicion of corruption stain the character of the future priest of God.

There are various offices in the seminary which are assigned to the students. This one may be appointed sacristan, another prefect, etc. These offices are surely those of honor, and show the confidence placed in the one upon whom they are imposed. It is a mistake, therefore, to consider such offices a burden, or to shirk the duties attendant upon them. It is by far more difficult to command wisely than to obey. Hence the authority connected with any such office should be prudently exercised. Authority must be enforced, but with prudence. Arrogance can have no place in one who realizes that although in authority, he is nevertheless a student. "*Primus inter pares*," ought to be the stand assumed by

The Seminarian

one thus honored. The respect and confidence of one's fellows are not to be forfeited because of an office. The success of a student officer of a seminary bespeaks success in priestly life, and vice versa. Conscientiousness, prudence, and fidelity are the qualities which spell success for student officials.

On the other hand it is a test of sincere obedience on the part of the student body at large to be docile toward such officers. The sincere seminarian does not look upon the person who commands, but rather upon the will of almighty God, which may be expressed as well by a student official as by one higher in authority. Petty meanesses — usually proceeding from jealousy — unwarranted criticism, and insubordination against these officials are just as reprehensible as if they were perpetrated against those higher.

Access to those in authority or to the professors is not only permitted but even welcomed in the seminary, provided certain rules are observed. In the first place, all must be considerate of one another. It must be remembered that those in authority have

The Seminarian

other work besides their official duties. If it be necessary to see them, it should be done at a time set by the rules of the house, or if there be no rule covering this exigency, by appointment. Considerateness requires that the visit have a serious reason, not merely a whimsical or fanciful one. Lastly, it is most advisable to have a talk with our superiors should there ever be any misunderstanding between a student and one in authority. Confidence between those in authority and their subjects, between professor and pupil, is the best aid to discipline, and also to contentment. Should the student have failed in some respect in a serious matter it is certainly well for him to acknowledge it, and give an explanation if one be possible. If the student has been wrongfully accused or misunderstood, a respectful and sincere statement will prove to the advantage of all concerned. If any one is aware of another's flagrant transgression it is no longer a privilege to see those in authority and report, but a duty. This is not said to encourage a system of espionage, but rather to prevent scandals. The offence

The Seminarian

must be certain, grievous, and unmistakable. If these be present, brotherly love as well as the good of the seminary require that it be reported.

Confidence between those in control and the student body is a powerful adjunct to good government as well as to good training. It is possible only then when founded on supernatural motives. The student must be convinced that all is arranged for his own present and future advantage. A seminary is different from any other school or institution. The motive in the seminary is the training of priests, upon whom the salvation of thousands is going to depend. Hence the training is earnest and serious, and this being realized by the ones in authority, their good judgment and their fairness must always be acknowledged. It is a God-given work for them, and their sincerity should never be questioned. They are indeed the representatives of God for the student, and their ruling and guidance are always to his advantage. In going to them he is assured that he is going to those who will treat him conscientiously and interestedly.

The Seminarian

It is customary in some seminaries for those who have transgressed a rule to accuse themselves of it to their prefect. An action of this sort is prompted by a spirit of self-improvement and penance. It not only aids the individual and promotes confidence, but it also aids the authorities in preserving good discipline. Self-accusation is irksome, but it is not too much to expect from those in a seminary, where all are striving for Christian perfection, and where all wish to acquire the virtues of humility, obedience, and penance. A virtue can be acquired only by repeated acts of the virtue desired. It need hardly be remembered that such a practise, to obtain the proper results, must be followed consistently. Surely there is no virtue in reporting an offence only when there is great probability of being detected. This would promote insincerity and inspire suspicion, not foster confidence.

To absent one's self — without previous permission from the proper authority — from a common exercise, or from a place where all are expected to be, is an offence, the greater just because one's absence among

The Seminarian

many is less detectable. To take an advantage because an offence will not be discovered cannot be condoned in a seminarian. An offence of this sort may be easily pardoned in a college student, but a seminarian, whose conception of seminary life is serious and earnest, will never demean himself by such a fault.

It is not the scope of this book to teach good manners. Every seminarian should, before leaving the seminary, make it his sacred duty to read a book on this subject, because, of all things, the priest is expected to be a man of good-breeding. There are some remarks, however, which will not be out of place, and are practical for every-day life in a seminary.

Consideration for others requires that in closing doors it be done gently, so as not to startle every one in the immediate vicinity.

The habit of economy suggests that the light in our room be put out if we are to be absent for any length of time. Illumination of any kind costs money, and unnecessary illumination is both waste and extravagance.

Consideration for health and cleanliness

The Seminarian

demand that our rooms be ventilated daily. During the winter opening the window two or three times a day for about five minutes will suffice for those who cannot endure an open window all the time. Linens, etc., should be regularly changed, laundered and repaired. These are points which are easily neglected, and yet their observance go much to the making of a gentleman. Shortcomings in these regards often make the priest an annoyance to the faithful and not seldom destroy an influence which might have been used for the good of souls.

A man is his own best servant. If necessary, however, to call on one of the house servants, it is but right that he be rewarded, if, as I here suppose, the service is out of the ordinary. Servants should be treated with kindness and consideration; never with familiarity, a fact which is of great import for a priest's life, and unless learned and practised in the seminary will not be observed in the rectory.

To recapitulate the chapter on obedience, the admonition of St. Paul serves the purpose very appropriately. "Obey . . . in the sim-

The Seminarian

plicity of your heart, as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”¹ Those who obey from so high a motive will be faithful in all things, be it in the laws of God or of His Church, be it the rules of the seminary or the ordinary requirements of life.

¹ Ephes. vi, 5-7.

CHAPTER V

*Fraternal Love: Particular Friendships:
No Friendship: Friends in the World
Etiquette · Wit and Humor
Conversation · Petty Sus-
piciousness · Cheer-
fulness · Good
Example*

“JESUS, knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. . . . A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.”¹ “He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is charity. If any man say, I love God and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth

¹ John xiii, 1, 34, 35.

The Seminarian

not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?"¹

Fraternal charity is the characteristic of the Christian. The first Christians were such striking exemplars of this virtue, that pagans in wonderment often exclaimed: "See how they love one another!" The reason why this virtue plays such a prominent rôle in the life of a Christian is evident from the texts just quoted. There can be no love of God without love of our neighbor.

We read in the lessons of the Breviary for the feast of St. John the Evangelist, that he continually exhorted his people to love one another. "At length, his disciples and brethren, tiring of always hearing him say the same thing, said to him, 'Master, why do you say the same thing to us so often?' John answered them, saying: 'Because it is the command of the Lord; and, if that be done, it is sufficient.'" Sufficient to gain eternal salvation when done with the proper motive, for Christ will have us understand "that what is done unto the least of these, our fellowmen, is done unto Himself."²

¹ 1 John iv, 8, 20.

² Matt. xxv, 40.

The Seminarian

If this be the value and necessity of fraternal charity among Christians, what must be said of its value and necessity within the seminary walls? Surely the sentiment must always reign there, as it did in the college of the Apostles, "*cor unum et anima una.*" All seminarians must be of one mind and one heart. Peace and concord, mutual love and forbearance, must above all be found in a seminary.

Men's characters differ as do their countenances. No two are exactly alike. Some qualities, characteristics, as we call them, excite our sympathy, others our antipathy. Those qualities which please us in others run parallel to kindred ones in ourselves, or with our ideas of what is desirable. Those qualities which cause antipathy diverge from our conception of what is good. The rule by which we most often judge is our feeling. But feeling often goes astray in matters of judgment. Likes and dislikes may well be unfair, therefore, to the object of our affection or antipathy.

No genuine fraternal love can exist unless it be based on the principles of virtue. We

The Seminarian

must love our neighbor as ourselves because almighty God has commanded it. Irrespective of characteristics we must love each one, excluding from our friendship only the morally bad. And by this love of our companions is meant that all be included in our prayers, and all be treated with the courtesy and respect due gentlemen and prospective priests.

The degree of love for various individuals is not determined by the law of God. Hence to care more for those whose characteristics please us and less for others whose characteristics antagonize us, if not very virtuous, is not very wrong, provided the general marks of courtesy and politeness are shown to all. But the faults apt to crop up here are too great an attachment for certain individuals, and too guarded a reserve toward others.

“Desire to be familiar only with God and His angels; and fly the acquaintance of man. We must have charity for all, but familiarity is not expedient.”¹ This undoubtedly is excellent spiritual advice. No man is more

¹ Thomas à Kempis, Book I, c. 8.

The Seminarian

beloved than he who is a friend to all, who strives as far as possible to treat all alike. Such characters are as precious as rare diamonds. They spread cheerfulness wherever they go, and their power and influence for good is incalculable. Such a character was that of St. John Berchmans. His company was sought, his influence for good attested to by all his companions.

It is false to imagine that some one must be singled out upon whom to lavish one's affection. The reasons for such friendships are the pleasure and consolation drawn from them. "If thou placest thy peace in any person, for the sake of thy contentment in his company, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled," says the "Following of Christ."¹ The danger is that such particular friendships so often deteriorate into occasions of sin. There is not that reserve and circumspection which protects from distraction. Often there is also a sensual love which, although perhaps not at first sinful, may later be a temptation. There is almost always the difficulty of keeping the thoughts from one so espe-

¹ *Ibid.*, Book III, c. 42.

The Seminarian

cially loved, which makes the mind unfit for serious study. "In Me must the love of thy friend stand," Christ says in the "Imitation," "and for Me he is to be loved, whosoever he be that appears to be good, and is very dear to thee in this life. Without Me no friendship is of any strength, nor will be durable; nor is that love true and pure of which I am not the Author. Thou oughtest to be so far mortified to such affections to persons beloved, as to wish, as far as appertains to thee, to be without any company of man."¹ The acid test of a friendship pleasing to almighty God is that the friend is loved without offence to almighty God, and that such a friendship would be willingly and promptly given up if there were the least suspicion that God willed the cessation of that particular affection. The sign of a dangerous friendship is that it is an occasion of sin, or even the occasion of temptation to sin.

The person who has Christ as his special friend, and who loves all men equally is the one who will make the greatest progress in

¹ Book III, c. 42.

The Seminarian

spiritual life. In return he will be beloved sincerely by God and his fellowmen.

Man is a sociable being. "It is not good for man to be alone," Holy Writ tells us. To adopt a manner of reserve toward our fellowmen would be a mistake. "Perfection consists," St. Francis of Sales tells us, "not in having no friendships, but in having none but with such as are good and holy."¹ Should a student find that a natural disposition holds him aloof from his companions, he must strive to overcome such a tendency, and to associate cheerfully with them. What is even worse would be a seminarian actually shunning the companionship of some of his fellow-students for no other reason than a feeling of antipathy. Were he guilty of any rudeness there might even be question of his committing sin in this.

St. Francis of Sales gives a beautiful exposition of the matter of friendships, in his "Introduction to a Devout Life." He agrees with the spiritual authors that there is no room for particular friendships among religious persons, as in a well-ordered mon-

¹ "Introduction to a Devout Life," c. xix.

The Seminarian

astery (and a seminary is to a great degree like a monastery). There, he maintains, "the common design all tends to true devotion. It is not requisite to make these particular communications of friendship, lest by seeking among individuals for that which is common to the whole, they should fall from particularities to partialities. But for those who dwell among worldlings, and desire to embrace true virtue, it is a necessity for them to unite themselves together by a holy and sacred friendship, since by this means they encourage, assist, and conduct each other to good. . . . In the world all are not directed by the same views, not actuated by the same spirit; we must, therefore, separate ourselves and contract friendships according to our several pretensions." As proof of these assertions he gives us the example of Christ in His love for Lazarus; and in the Apostles, St. Paul's love for Timothy. "You must not," he says, "forsake or neglect the friendships which nature or former duties oblige you to cultivate with your parents, kindred, benefactors, neighbors, and others." The conclusion to

The Seminarian

be drawn from these words is that particular friendships in a seminary are out of place. Special friendships with such living in the world are commendable when actuated by the good which may come from them for God's glory, one's own or our neighbor's spiritual welfare. It may be remarked in connection with this point that correspondence which, from time to time, may be necessary to foster such friendships, must be kept well in check, lest it should encroach upon the duties of the cleric. Correspondence at the expense of duty vitiates what might otherwise be a good work.

"True politeness is in reality mere Christian charity, and constant humility and thoughtfulness for others, along with certain conventional forms superadded which themselves are or ought to be dictated by good sense and good feeling."¹ There can be no excuse for rudeness among those who are to be the representatives of Christ. A breach in politeness, as a rule, is a fault against charity. Any one who has that high regard for the priesthood to which that

¹ "At Home with God," Rev. M. Russell, S.J., p. 31.

The Seminarian

calling is entitled cannot fail in etiquette toward those chosen to embrace an office so sublime. The familiarity made necessary by common life in a seminary must never put aside the dictates of politeness, or the respect which a cleric should have for his fellows is lost; charity suffers, and the noble design of the seminary to train priests worthy of their calling is greatly hampered. Liberties, which are not allowed in polite society, may not be permitted among clerics. The expressions, "Thank you; Please; beg your pardon," and "Mr. So-and-So," are as necessary to keep up the respect one for the other in the seminary as they are in the social world. Except for this difference: In the world they are often mere hollow forms; in the seminary they should be the expressions of respect toward those who will one day be Christ's ambassadors.

This paragraph from "A Priest of To-day" is a gem. "A habit of sympathetic appreciation will make our intercourse with others sweet and harmonious. Let us cultivate it, and cultivate, too, its outward expression in acts of courtesy and observance. 'For one

The Seminarian

of the best means,' says Cardinal Gibbons, 'a priest can adopt for preserving peace and concord among his colleagues is to observe the canons of politeness and the rules of exterior decorum,' as on the other hand one of the most frequent causes of the studied reserve and misunderstandings sometimes noticeable among clergymen is their neglect of exterior acts of courtesy toward one another." ¹

This is true, because, as spiritual writers all maintain, politeness has a heavenly value only when prompted by a supernatural motive. Hence Father Russell, S.J., gives us the following quotations, culled from famous writers, concerning this subject: "Politeness is the fuel of charity." "A little politeness is exceedingly useful in preserving charity." "Politeness is one of the safeguards and exercises of charity." ²

Wit and humor are well-defined in the following statement. "The witty man laughs at you; the humorous man laughs with you." To be witty at the expense of others is un-

¹ Chap. iii, p. 40.

² "At Home with God," pp. 34, 35.

The Seminarian

charitable; to be humorous to the glee of all may be virtuous. "In certain phases of worldly society it seems that nothing more is needed to pass for a wit than to parade noisily the faults and weaknesses, especially of the timid and retiring, with utter disregard for Christian or even pagan politeness, and with still greater disregard for the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount." Seminarians should be cheerful and good-humored, but it must not be at the cost of pain and grief to another. Most uncharitable is the practise, sometimes found in communities, of making some one member the butt of all jokes. This often makes life miserable for the unfortunate victim no matter how good-natured he may be, and might even be the cause of discouragement and the giving up of a vocation. There is many a heart of gold under a somewhat gruff and unpolished exterior. This fault is insidious, because no harm is intended — and yet the sting for the victim is seldom considered.

More common is the failing of uncharitable talk. "If any man offend not with his tongue, that same is a perfect man," is

The Seminarian

the well-known saying of St. James. It is so evident that detraction must be avoided that no disquisition on the subject is necessary. Suffice it to give two brief rules: Make the topics of your conversation things rather than persons; if you have nothing good to say of your neighbor, say nothing at all. A young seminarian was once being praised, and the praise consisted of the remark that he was never heard speaking ill of any one. A trait beloved by men as well as by God!

“Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue,”¹ is the further advice of Holy Scripture. Change the subject of conversation, show your displeasure, let it be known that you do not approve of uncharitable talk. “We must try never to be uncharitable or ill-natured, but always good-natured and good-tempered, and so to keep up around us an atmosphere in which uncharitable talk would be an impossible solecism.”²

Do not be suspicious of others. This fault

¹ Ecclus. xxviii, 28,

² “At Home with God,” Rev. M. J. Russell, S.J., p. 35.

The Seminarian

takes the joy out of one's own life because it makes it seem that there are so few whom one can trust; it is an injustice against one's neighbor because it tries him without a chance for defence. How often suspicion is entertained of others with no other reason for it than external appearances. And later it is proven that there has been a mistake. It is strange how precious a soul may be concealed in a person seemingly, or even actually, guilty of many faults. We may never safely judge, or even surmise the motives actuating others. Were we in similar circumstances, our conduct also would most probably be similar to that upon which we look with displeasure and condemnation. Suspicious people are apt to become cynical. They cannot meet their fellowmen in an open, candid manner; unconsciously they are always on their guard, reserved, and thus find it difficult to form and foster friendships. "Judge not that you may not be judged."¹

It is observable that there is no class of men so easily provoked to laughter as a body

¹ Matt. vii, 1.

The Seminarian

of seminarians. From this it must not be concluded that they are in any way light-minded, but rather that a seminary is a joyful habitation. And indeed so it should be. "A good laughter is a godsend in a community," Father Russell quotes one of his fellow-priests as saying, and he adds: "But he certainly meant his laughter to be good-natured laughter, totally free from malice and uncharitableness." Half the difficulties and burdens attendant upon seminary life are dissipated by the light heartedness of the students. It is a duty we owe our fellowmen to be cheerful and good-natured. And the reward is received immediately, for the company of such is ever sought and appreciated. Some dispositions find it difficult to be cheerful. Let them remember that this characteristic can be acquired and, when practised from good motives, may be a virtue. It will certainly prove a blessing in after-life, and mean much for the priest, whose mission is one of cheerfulness and encouragement. It ought not to be difficult for those living in the state of God's grace to go through life optimistically,

The Seminarian

and thus attract many to the service of almighty God. Cheerfulness is to be cherished, and when it is discovered that religion is actually a source of such cheerfulness, their religion is more highly esteemed.

Another striking quotation of the author of "At Home With God" is taken from Madam Swetchine, which says: "There is a silent apostleship, a living *Credo*, an incessant and efficacious mission, which consists in the natural radiance, the true and profound contentment of certain holy souls; for the joy which such persons feel in religion is, of all homages to religion, the least suspected." This natural radiance is the cheerfulness these souls spread about them by that good-humor, natural or acquired, which is rooted in the joy of serving God with a pure conscience, and of loving their fellowmen for the sake of God.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"¹ Where one gives good example to the other! Where Christian virtues are taught and imbibed from good example! Where the ex-

¹ Psalm cxxxii, 1.

The Seminarian

ample of one is an incentive for emulation! In the seminary examples of humility, fervor, patience, and obedience do as much as exhortations to acquire and practise these virtues.

But let it be borne in mind that if this good example is to be found in the community each member must do his share. With Christ as the model each must strive to follow Him as nearly as possible.

The good in others is always a matter for imitation; the faults that may be discovered are to be avoided, remembering, however, that such as show a less edifying example are not to be condemned immediately. "If thou canst not make thyself such a one as thou wouldst, how canst thou expect to have another according to thy liking?" says Thomas à Kempis.¹ Always allow for human frailty. God's grace can do all things and the one you criticize, even mentally, may far surpass you in grace and virtue in the near future.

What St. Paul writes for all the members of the Church applies especially to the clergy

¹ Book I, c. 16.

The Seminarian

and its candidates. "For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, . . . either ministry, in ministering; or he that teacheth in doctrine; he that exhorteth in exhorting . . . Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another." ¹ Thus shall be realized "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together."

¹ Romans xii, 4-10.

CHAPTER VI

Clerical Modesty: Dress, Manner, Eyes, Reading, Speech, Cassock Modesty in Taste, in Furnishings

CLERICAL modesty is an important factor in the life of every theologian. "The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man show what he is,"¹ says Holy Writ. This clerical modesty consists principally in an external moderation and reserve in speech, dress, and manners.

The clerical state raises the student from the people, and places him in a class of men which may be ranked between man and the angels. The distinctive mark of this class of men is their modesty. Speech, manner, and dress must proclaim the cleric. Being the dispensers of the mysteries of God, priests have a dignity which is unique. Their lives must be in accordance with this dignity.

¹ Ecclus. xix, 27.

The Seminarian

Although "the habit does not make the monk," nevertheless, it is meet that clerics wear such clothing as is becoming their station in life, so that, as the Council of Trent admonishes, the outward appearance of the priest shall show the interior integrity of his morals. Hence when the cassock may not be worn, at least black attire should be used, the coat to be long, coming almost to the knees. Such are the rules laid down by the Councils of Baltimore. The Roman collar is never to be dispensed with by those who have received minor orders. A soldier is proud of his uniform, and there is never an occasion when he is prevented from wearing it. A cleric should be proud of his clerical uniform and there ought never be an occasion when he would like to change it.

A priest is in the world but not of the world. He is a follower of Christ and the Apostles, and hence, to be worthy of them must at least be poor in spirit. His models must be Christ and the Apostles, not worldlings. Christ surely approves of decency in dress, cleanliness, and neatness. But we could not suppose that He would approve of

The Seminarian

foppishness modeled upon that of the world. Showy dress, jewelry, tonsorial fashions, are certainly unbecoming the aspirant to the priesthood. "Let your modesty be known to all men."¹

No man takes his neighbor to task for being pleasant. The person who meets you with a smile invites confidence and sincerity. If the smile be the radiance of inward amiability and kindness it is a power for good; if it be supercilious, it offends against modesty; if it be a smile occasioned by vulgarity it is equally as offensive.

Also the gait of the man shows what he is, says the Scripture. A proud, haughty carriage is repulsive to the faithful; the priest who would be a true father to his people, easy of approach, must do all he can to inspire trust. A haughty carriage affrights them, and as a result they will approach the priest only when it is necessary, and even then not without fear. A swaggering gait savors of the sport, and tends to give the impression that the priest is not a serious man, to be trusted with trials and diffi-

¹ Phil. iv, 5.

The Seminarian

culties. A slovenly gait betrays carelessness and laziness, which is construed by the people as meaning, ask no more of me than is strictly my duty. The carriage of the student — and by the word “gait” of the Bible we may understand carriage — should be dignified as becoming a priest, but not haughty; agile and vigorous, but not sporty; grave, but not forbidding. St. Francis of Sales gives a graphic summary of what has thus far been said on this subject in writing: “Some become proud and insolent, . . . by being dressed in a fine suit of clothes; but who does not see the folly of this? For if there be any glory in such things, the glory belongs to the tailor; and what a meanness of heart must it be to borrow from some ridiculous new fashion? Others value themselves for a well-trimmed beard, for curled locks, or soft hands; but are not these effeminate men who seek to raise their reputation by so frivolous and foolish things? . . . Others strut like peacocks, contemplating their beauty and think themselves admired by every one. All this is extremely vain, foolish, and impertinent. . . . If you

The Seminarian

would know whether a man be truly wise, learned, or generous, observe whether his qualifications tend to humility, modesty, and submission; for then they shall be good indeed; but if they swim on the surface, and strive to appear above water, they shall be so much the less true in the same proportion as they appear.”¹

“Look not round about thee in the ways of the city.”² Modesty is also required of the eyes. The eyes are the windows of the soul, and unless they are guarded, death shall enter the soul through them. It is an offence against clerical modesty, for instance, for a theological student to walk through the street gazing into all the show windows. Although the priest ought be an art lover, nevertheless he must beware of examining public art displays. Often next to a religious masterpiece may be found an indecent picture. The world, seeing a priest or cleric viewing these pictures, will not suppose that he is looking only at the religious picture, but will accuse him of examining

¹ “Introduction to a Devout Life.” Of Exterior Humility.

² Eccclus. ix, 7.

The Seminarian

the indecent one. And what is more, the sight of the indecent picture may, if not at once, perhaps a long time afterward, prove a source of temptation by reverting to the imagination. The eyes must be guarded to save the soul from sin.

“Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up,”¹ Holy Writ advises. “It is very easy for a man or a woman to refrain from adultery, but it is not as easy to refrain from glances of the eyes.”² Unless this blessed gift of modesty be acquired by constant restraint, the temptations against purity are apt to be many and frequent. Modesty of the eyes is the outer fortress of the heart, and when once this is broken down it is easy to conquer the purity of the soul.

The eyes must be kept well in check also as to reading. There is an idle curiosity in the hearts of most men which is to be battled against. Always have a praiseworthy motive in all your reading, and if in doubt as to the advisability of reading certain books, or certain matter, consult your confessor.

¹ Ecclus. ix, 8.

² Psalm cxi, 3-4.

The Seminarian

Akin to the importance of modesty of the eyes is modesty in our words. There is hardly anything more shocking to the faithful than indecent or vulgar language from a priest. Because of the reverence in which they hold the priest, an indecent word or expression from him is as surprising as if they heard the same from an angel. But such words, and this is true of profanity, will be inadvertently uttered before the people, unless the aspirant to the priesthood has accustomed himself to watch assiduously over his words. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words." ¹

Such words may be a scandal to our companions. "Be careful never to permit an indecent word to escape your lips," St. Francis of Sales counsels, "for although you do not speak it with an ill intention, yet it may be hurtful to those that hear it. An evil word falling into a weak heart spreads itself like a drop of oil falling on linen; nay, it sometimes seizes on the heart in such a

¹ St. Francis of Sales, "Devout Life." Of Small Temptations.

The Seminarian

manner as to fill it with a thousand unclean thoughts and temptations to lust." As for indecent and obscene things, the Apostle will not have them named among us, assuring us "That nothing so much corrupteth good manners as a wicked discourse."¹

Modesty requires that the cleric be careful not to appear before any one unless decently dressed. "Men are but children of a larger growth," and if children are carefully trained never to appear before any one unless modestly dressed in order thus to protect their sense of modesty, surely priests, who should be as careful and as sincerely simple as children in this regard, ought also to be as careful. *Négligé* in one's room may be tolerated, but even this is not advisable, for unless nothing offensive to modesty is allowed even in private, the sense of modesty wanes. A sense of modesty cannot be sufficiently impressed upon us, for when this is lost, the vice of impurity usually begins. We must be modest even when alone.

Theologians are not day-laborers, hence there seems to be no excuse to go about at

¹ "Devout Life." Modesty in Our Words.

The Seminarian

home in shirt sleeves. They do not live alone, therefore they dare not be so dressed as not to be able to be seen by others without embarrassment. "Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh."¹ The eye of God is upon us even when we are alone.

These thoughts lead to another regarding the cassock. The livery of the priest is the cassock. It should be his best-loved attire. It is the characteristic garb of priest and cleric. Being characteristic, it ought be the attire in which the cleric ought, ordinarily, to be found. It ought to be donned in the morning and not removed unless necessity requires it. This is the wish of Holy Mother Church. Due to the busy life of the priest in America, this practise of wearing the cassock continuously has grown somewhat lax. The priest, being necessitated so often to appear upon the streets, the change from cassock to street attire is burdensome. But this inconvenience is gladly put up with by those who love their cassock and see in it the livery of Christ. The cassock, too, acts as a continual

¹ Phil. iv, 5.

The Seminarian

reminder of the modesty expected of the priest and warns him not to act in a manner to do dishonor to his livery.

There is another meaning of the word modesty, which has no connection with the virtue of purity, such as modesty in the meaning used above. As when we say a man is modest in his tastes, by which is meant that he makes no great demands to satisfy desires which might be perfectly lawful, but inconsistent with his station in life. Thus a man who might have luxurious living-rooms satisfies himself with plain and unostentatious furniture, perfect in quality but of a simple, serviceable design savoring neither of luxury nor effeminacy. In this sense, too, the cleric's taste should be modest. There is no place for either luxury or effeminacy in this regard. The furnishings of a room must be simple and virile to meet the requirements of the ideal priest. Tastes are to be acquired at the seminary. What is proper for the priest is taught in the seminary and should be begun there. We are to be followers of Christ. "*Dominus pars hereditatis meae, et calicis mei, tu es,*

The Seminarian

qui restitues hereditatem meam, mihi;” are the words which the young man says when at the reception of the tonsure he enters among the clergy. “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance.” The things of the world, therefore, are despised by the cleric, and he looks forward to the delights of heaven as alone worthy of him. He willingly denies himself the ease and luxuries of this life to obtain the surer delights of his heavenly inheritance.

The idea is not to be conveyed that the secular clergy must live in cells, devoid of all furnishings except what is strictly necessary. No. A priest’s room should be inviting and attractive, so that he will be satisfied and glad to be in it, but for this luxury is not at all necessary. Simplicity and a desire to imitate the example of Christ will give the rules for the proper furnishings of a cleric’s room. The priest’s room is not a lady’s boudoir, but a study-room stocked with useful books. It is not an elegant drawing-room ornamented with dainty furniture and gaudy nick-nacks, but a room reflecting the serious position of the man of

The Seminarian

God; ornamented with beautiful and artistic pictures, and perhaps statues of Christ and the saints, conspicuous among them a crucifix. To summarize this matter we have the words of Rev. Thomas O'Donnell, C.M., in his "Priest of To-day," reading, "the general character of a priest's home should be marked by simplicity and a certain sense of religious feeling. In site, size, and style it should be unpretentious, not provoking unfriendly comment nor exceeding the requirements of one who has left all things for the sake of Christ. Ornaments should be plain and solid, furniture not extravagant, and pictures and prints not of a kind to offend the eyes of modesty." He deplors that some are "lacking in good taste, either ministering to luxury and worldly desires, or slovenly in their character."¹ These ideals regarding modesty of taste must be imbibed in the seminary and followed out in the priesthood.

¹ "The Priest of To-day," p. 99.

CHAPTER VII

*Study: Prayer, Humility, Efficiency,
Secular Knowledge, Sacred Elo-
quence, Liturgy, Singing
Sociology · Pedagogy
Catechetics · Love
for Children*

“**T**HE lips of the priest shall keep knowledge; they shall seek the law at his mouth.”¹ What a responsibility for the priest! The task of acquiring genuine knowledge is for the seminarian second only to the obligation of gaining Christian perfection. After a pure heart, knowledge is the priest’s chief glory. The praise of knowledge is sung in the book of Wisdom. Solomon says: “I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone; for all gold in comparison of her is

¹ Mal. ii, 7.

The Seminarian

as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay. I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light; for her light cannot be put out.”¹

True knowledge is the knowledge of God, or secular knowledge acquired for God — therefore, its acquisition must be undertaken with the purest of intentions. The seminarian should be actuated by the desire to gain knowledge in order to be an efficient worker in the vineyard of the Lord. His knowledge and his exemplary life, as a priest, shall be the means of attracting men to God’s love and service.

Prayer is the great aid to sound study. “I called upon God and the spirit of wisdom came upon me.”² The brilliant scholars of the Church were men of prayer. St. Thomas Aquinas attests that he learned most from contemplation of the crucified Redeemer. Albertus Magnus, his illustrious master, is said to owe his learning to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Bonaventure and St. Aloysius, and the

¹ *Wisd.* vii, 8-10.

² *Ibid.*, vii, 7.

The Seminarian

other wise men of God, showed by their writings and practise how much they trusted in prayer to acquire genuine knowledge. The practises of beginning study with prayer and interspersing it with pious ejaculations is as old as the study of the sacred sciences themselves.

Study also requires a spirit of abnegation. No little effort is necessary to overcome the tediousness of study. Daily fidelity to study will accomplish wonderful results; among the most valuable a habit and love of study. In this manner a less agreeable subject becomes not only more agreeable, but even pleasant. For some the self-denial consists in controlling their eagerness for knowledge. They have difficulty in confining their studies to the proper time. They would allow their studies to encroach upon their recreation, their sleep, or their prayer. *Virtus est in medio.* Not too little, not too much, utilizing to the best of one's ability the time apportioned by the rules of the seminary for study is the best rule.

The spirit of abnegation is called into play when the student must humiliate himself

The Seminarian

by confessing his failure to understand some of the matter already treated. A severe teacher this, but a very salutary one. St. Thomas was thought a student of little talent, but he became a brilliant intellectual light. The low estimation in which he was held rather pleased than discouraged him. The humble shall be exalted.

Brilliant talents are always a danger. There is ever the need to be cautious in the display of learning, and those gifted by almighty God have reason to fear lest the demon of pride arise in their hearts, and cause them to lose the good fruits which would otherwise be theirs. Students need humility. Ever must it be borne in mind that "one student may be endowed with brilliant acquirements, another with solid judgment. It does not always occur that these two gifts are conspicuously combined in the same person."¹ The venerable Curé d'Ars was not noted for brilliancy in his studies, but his biography discloses rare judgment in things spiritual, which resulted in wonderful attainments for almighty God.

¹ Cardinal Gibbons, "Ambassador of Christ," p. 39.

The Seminarian

There is every reason, then, to be humble, for knowledge alone is no guarantee of future usefulness in the vineyard of the Lord. It is folly to exalt the brilliant or despise a less brilliant brother. He may surpass us by far in his accomplishments in the ministry.

In these days, when efficiency is so lauded, it is necessary for the priest to be as well-equipped with knowledge as possible. The priest is expected to have some knowledge on all subjects. In endeavoring to meet this expectation there is danger of depreciating the severe sciences of theology, and of cramming the mind with matters of information which may, it is true, give him a reputation of learnedness, but will hardly fit him for the real and serious problems of life. Let the student be convinced of the fact that true mental equipment for sacerdotal work is a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of dogmatic and moral theology, together with the kindred branches of biblical study, canon law, liturgy, and sacred eloquence.

Should, then, no effort be made to gain a knowledge of languages, the liberal arts,

The Seminarian

and sciences? Yes, in as far as they are subservient to the theological branches, or helpful for the sacred ministry afterward, provided always that neither the time nor energy necessary for the sacred sciences be encroached upon. A well-informed priest is not always a learned priest; but a priest grounded in theology is one well equipped for his priestly offices, even though his knowledge in other fields may be less extensive.

It must not be inferred from this that secular subjects are to be slighted. The student ought to be like the bee, which, besides the honey, also makes the wax. We know which is the more precious — but none depreciates the wax, since its use is to contain the honey. Similarly, secular knowledge is useful as a setting for sacred knowledge. It is often the means through which sacred knowledge is made of value. It acts very often as an introduction for salutary work with those of the world, or as a vehicle for imparting sacred truths.

In gathering sacred knowledge the student will wisely be on the alert to collect information on kindred secular subjects, and,

The Seminarian

if possible, to note it; ever mindful, however, that theology comes first. All else is secondary.

There is another danger which must be guarded against by the student — a recourse to many books and authors, without mastering any. The opinion of the ancient authors was: "*Timeo unius libri lectorem.*" Master the text-books used at the seminary; then and then only, is there time to delve into the works of other authors. The reading of various authors on the subject at hand without first having mastered one's text-book tends but to confuse. Having a good comprehension of the authors of one's text-books gives the key to others, who are then perused with profit and pleasure.

There can be no doubt as to the necessity of a thorough knowledge of dogmatic and moral theology, as well as biblical studies. Some of the other clerical branches are at times slighted. Sacred eloquence is of prime importance. The priest must of necessity be an orator. Some have the gift of oratory by nature, others must acquire it by practise and study. Oratory is defined as the art

The Seminarian

of convincing an audience and moving them to action by means of speech. Sacred eloquence is the art of presenting Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to incite one to, and further in one a Christian life. For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary to have all the qualities of a great orator. The simple presentation of Christian truths by one convinced of their value, and animated by zeal for the glory of God and the welfare of his neighbor, is most effective. Far more so than the well-polished oration, which may be modeled on all the rules of oratory, but lacks the incentives of speaking for the furtherance of God's glory and the good of the hearer. This statement is not meant to disparage the value of fine oratory. Every help to convince and to move an audience to do good or shun evil, to convince of a truth and to have it accepted by the hearer, is not only in place, but indispensable in order to gain the ends for which preaching is intended.

As to the rules of oratory, the clerical student must master and learn to apply them, making use of every laudable means

The Seminarian

to attain the ends of preaching. However, those less adept in the art of speaking may rest assured that if they are imbued with the conviction of truth, and animated with the spirit of glorifying God and helping their brethren, they will attain a homely eloquence, which will not fail to result in good preaching.

The priest convinced of the fact that he is the messenger of Christ, with the authority of Christ and His Church to teach and lead the people to a Christian life, will never miss his mark. This conviction gives courage to the timid, eloquence to the naturally taciturn, power of persuasion to the seemingly less gifted. Practise is the keystone of success; the rules of oratory, the hand-maid to forcible, convincing, and effective preaching.

Since St. Paul says: "*fides ex auditu*," the importance of being a good preacher is at once evident. It is a branch of seminary training which dare not be neglected, and every effort must be made to attain this faculty.

There is hardly anything in the Church's

The Seminarian

cult as impressive as her liturgy. It is a silent sermon, which is continually brought before the Catholic mind, teaching lessons of faith and reverence. All the sacraments and services of the Church are surrounded by significant actions which are like the settings to precious gems. Hence the rigid rules which govern the administration of the sacraments and the performance of the other sacred functions of the clergy. How many owe their conversion more to the sacred ceremonies of the Church than to the spoken word!

To carry out the ceremonies of Catholic liturgy the rubrics must be well-studied. Their performance must be undertaken with dignity and reverence. How lamentable is the fact that many regard these rules but lightly, and in after years observe them carelessly? Unfortunate, indeed, is the cleric who is not imbued with an appreciation of and reverence for sacred things. And it is true that a higher estimation of them is seldom acquired than that attained at the seminary. Sad to say, not perfection, but rather retrogression in the performance of

The Seminarian

sacred functions is the rule with those who have not acquired this reverence and respect during their preparatory years. The reasons seem to be a certain lack of regard for the rubrics, a natural intimacy with things sacred, and carelessness, due to inattention, distractions, and the hurry with which many ceremonies are performed. Only a fixed determination, formed in the seminary, and a continual watchfulness, with an occasional examination of conscience on this matter, will counteract these tendencies, will keep the cleric and priest conscientious and correct in all liturgical functions. To have a friendly censor to remind one of shortcomings in this matter is also most beneficial. Any fellow-cleric or brother priest will act as our critic if we but ask him to perform this kindly act for us, and humbly accept his criticism. The liturgy of the Church is so important, and plays so great a rôle in the priest's life, that no amount of care and attention is too much for those convinced of its beauty and of the spirit of the Church in enjoining it upon her ministers.

The Seminarian

Of similar importance is the liturgical singing, which the priest by virtue of his office is called upon to furnish. There often seems to be a disinclination to treat this subject seriously, and yet scarcely anything mars a beautiful liturgical function more than careless, indifferent singing by the priest. Incorrect singing is a continual source of distraction at Holy Mass or other services in which the priest has officially to take part. On the other hand, observance of the notes and a little effort to chant them well, adds dignity and solemnity to the function, and is a wonderful aid to devotion for all present.

The chants of the Church are acknowledged to be most beautiful. The dignified solemnity and devotion of a Preface or the Pater Noster of the Mass is rarely surpassed by any composition of music. Why, then, not strive to chant them well? It is not so much a lack of musical ability as a lack of endeavor which accounts for the poor singing of many priests. There are among the clergy those who have no musical abilities at all, and still they sing the ordinary

The Seminarian

liturgical chants correctly. For this result, however, they had to practise, and have, each time they sing, to make an effort, but the result is gratifying. The seminary is the place where the student can train himself to sing the liturgical chants correctly, provided he has patience and perseverance. Every priest is not supposed to be a musical artist, but every priest is expected to sing the ordinary chants in an acceptable manner.

Natural, devotional chanting is an honor for God and an edification for the people. To sing for effect or in a manner other than prescribed, robs the singing of its good and dispels all its sacred unction. This fault also must be avoided.

These subjects of preaching, liturgy, and chanting are belittled by some because they know a priest can go through his career doing them indifferently, and still not be accounted unsuccessful. It may be true — but the zealous priest is not the man to depreciate any demand made by the Church. He will not shirk doing well anything calculated to glorify God and to gain souls. Much more

The Seminarian

might have been written on these subjects, and many quotations cited in proof of the assertions made. Suffice it to say that these comments will incite the docile and determined seminarian to give to God the best that is in him, to give these subjects due attention, and to perfect himself in them as much as lies in his power to do so.

There are other subjects of vast importance, although allotted less time for study in the seminary curriculum because of the mass of matter to be covered during the course. These subjects are sociology, pedagogy, and catechetics. They are important because they teach method in the ordinary tasks of parish work. One may possibly get on without them. Ingenuity and zeal will invent methods. But the priest will be handicapped, and often lose much time in forming and trying out different methods and plans. To be without a knowledge of these branches is as bad for a priest as it would be for a mechanic to work without having served his apprenticeship. The study of sociology, which fits the priest with correct principles and effective methods

The Seminarian

in dealing with labor problems; and which aids in the amelioration of adverse domestic conditions among the poor, is of an importance not to be underestimated. And the study of pedagogy and catechetics, to enable the priest intelligently to conduct a school and to instruct the children in catechism, is of even more importance. To expect to leave this work to the religious teachers is not at all in conformity with the desire of the Church, or for the best interests of the children. No pastoral work gives better spiritual results than catechizing the children. If we but consider for a moment that these children are to be the future Catholics of the Church, and that their young minds are now best suited to imbibe and retain the truths of Catholic doctrine and morality, none will shirk the performance of this solemn duty, and no seminarian would hesitate to equip himself to the best of his ability for a work so rich in results. Without a knowledge of pedagogy or catechetics the young priest will be without method, or well-defined principles on this matter. Even granted that he strives to do

The Seminarian

his best, it will be years before he adopts a fixed method and works with efficiency.

This consideration leads to a remark concerning the young priest's love for children. There is hardly a means more fruitful for spiritual good in a parish than that offered by the children. First, obtain the children's good will, and then through the children work into their families. Children are simple, trusting, and affectionate, and when they know that they have a friend in the young priest, they give themselves over entirely to his good influence. "The children whose youth is influenced by an intelligent and prudent priest rarely fall into modern grossness."¹ Every parent is interested in his child, and when the priest shows concern about that child, a kindly feeling is enkindled between parent and priest, which can be made productive of much spiritual good. To revert to our subject, let it be borne well in mind that to foster close and intimate contact with the children no better method is possible than to personally instruct them in Christian doctrine once or

¹ "The Training of a Priest," Dr. Smith.

The Seminarian

twice a week, for which task the seminary course of catechetics is best calculated to give results. These subjects, therefore, although less time may be appropriated to them, should be followed seriously; and when possible even private readings on the matter may be undertaken.

The priest must have knowledge. The matter to be mastered is much, the time in which it must be gained is short. But under the most favorable circumstances, and all being done well, if there be not the pure intention of gaining knowledge for God's sake, all will be in vain. "Never read anything that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise." "Study rather to mortify thy vices, for that will avail thee more than being able to answer hard questions."¹ Seek knowledge for the sake of furthering God's glory, and for helping men to gain their eternal salvation. For God and one's fellowman, but never solely for one's self.

¹ "The Following of Christ," c. 43.

CHAPTER VIII

Bodily Care: Eating and Drinking, Table Manners, Intoxicants Exercise · Association with Others

THE old canon is to the point in stating, "The body is to be cared for only in as far as it is necessary to refresh its strength to enable it to perform works of virtue."¹ This is the rule that should govern the taking of food and drink as well as the taking of recreation.

An old pastor of much experience and spirituality was often heard to say that the worst fault besetting those who advance in the spiritual life is a tendency to gluttony. They seem to take to this fault as a sort of recompense for their many deprivations and self-denial in other spheres. "We should attend with great reverence to the admoni-

¹ C. Convivi a 6 Dist. 44 coll c. Nihil 28 Dist 5 de cons.

The Seminarian

tion given by our blessed Saviour to His disciples," says St. Francis of Sales. "'Eat such things as are set before you.'¹ It is, in my opinion, a greater virtue to eat without choice that which is laid before you, and in the same order it is presented, whether it be more or less agreeable to your taste, than always to choose the worst; for although this latter way of living seems more austere, yet the former has more resignation, since by it we renounce not only our own taste but even our own choice. And it is no small mortification to accommodate our taste to every kind of meat and keep it in subjection to all occurrences. Besides, this kind of mortification makes no parade, gives no trouble to any one, and is happily adapted to civil life. To set one kind of meat aside to take another — to eat of every dish — to think nothing well-dressed, or sufficiently exquisite — bespeaks a heart too much attached to delicacies and dainties. I esteem St. Bernard in drinking oil instead of water or wine more than if he had drunk designedly the most bitter draught; for it was a sure

¹ Luke x, 8.

The Seminarian

sign that he did not consider what he drank; and in this indifference respecting our food consists the perfection of the practise of that sacred rule, 'Eat that which is set before you.' I except, however, such meats as may prejudice the health, or incommode the spirit, such as hot and high-seasoned meats; as also certain occasions in which nature requires assistance in order to be able to support some labor for the glory of God. A continual and moderate propriety is preferable to violent abstinences practised occasionally, and mingled with great relaxations."¹ What excellent advice for the theological student in regard to eating and drinking. A counsel to avoid eating and drinking for their own sake, and to perform them as necessities of nature — to neglect which would be offensive to the good God! How reasonable of St. Francis to make allowances for these needs, and still find in their very satisfaction the means of self-denial and mortification.

The manner of taking our food and drink can also be made a means of virtue. Table

¹ "Introduction to a Devout Life."

The Seminarian

manners are to be observed at the seminary, and in the rectory as well as in public. Those who fail to observe them in private or among intimate company will surely be embarrassed when eating in public. These rules of etiquette are not conventionalities, which may be employed or neglected at will; they are the marks which distinguish the gentleman, which the priest is ever to be in virtue of his dignified calling. "While there may be occasions when the deliberate neglect of such niceties is more manifestation of genuine politeness than would be their observance, these fine points of etiquette do not, as a rule, conflict with any higher duty or quasi-obligation, and consequently are not to be disregarded. If Father Patrick, taking dinner with one of his parishioners out in the country, conforms to the local custom of drinking his coffee from his saucer, and eating his peas with his knife, his kindly motive deprives his action of all boorishness or 'bad form;' but he certainly should not acquire the habit of doing so. Nor need he, even on the score of kindness, imitate the manners of his rural entertainer so closely

The Seminarian

as to sit down to the table in his shirt-sleeves."

The observance of table etiquette may at times be irksome, but it is a means of self-control which acts favorably even upon spiritual life. And in the spirit of drawing spiritual good from so small a matter it ought be acquired and observed.

As to drinking intoxicants, let us remember, that while temperance is enjoined upon all, total abstinence is within the choice of the individual. "Priests should take a deep interest in societies established for the promotion of temperance, and the only temperance for most persons is total abstinence. No man knows what latent tendency to alcoholism he may have, especially in America. . . . In alcoholism the mental changes are gradual and progressive. The intellect is blunted, the judgment becomes foolish, and the moral sense is dulled." ¹

Total abstinence has been a safeguard for many, is fruitful of good example, and, when observed from a spiritual motive, is an excellent means of self-conquest, productive

¹ O'Malley & Walsh, "Essays in Pastoral Medicine."

The Seminarian

of much spiritual progress. As Our Lord says of another counsel, let it be said also in this regard, "He that can take, let him take it."¹

There is an intimate connection, so far as health is concerned, between eating and exercising. Both must have their proper attention. The cleric, and later on the priest, leads a sedentary life. The exercise afforded the layman by his labor is lacking the seminarian, and he must take time for recreation and exercise. The bow always bent will snap, the man always engaged without relaxation will break in health. His Eminence, the Cardinal of Mechlin, told his seminarians: "The physical life of our organs and, as a consequence, the activity of our moral being, are subject to the law of repose, and the health of the whole organism to the equilibrium of the functions of the different organs which constitute it. . . . Throw yourselves heart and soul into the recreations and outdoor exercises which your seminary provides and organizes for your benefit. In these your souls are safe, and they

¹ Matt. xix, 12.

The Seminarian

will be the means of helping, instead of hindering, the higher efforts of your interior life."

This opinion, to devote time to relaxation, is confirmed by all who have given the matter consideration. Even the austere St. Teresa says: "Take care, then, of the body for the love of God, for many a time the body must serve the soul; and let recourse be had to some recreations, such as conversation and going out into the fields, as the confessor may direct." The Rev. Father O'Neill, C.S.C., in his admirable book, "Priestly Practice," devotes a chapter to "Clerical Health and Exercise." He is an ardent champion of walking as an ideal exercise for the cleric. So enthusiastic is his argument that one of his reverend readers said he walked through an entire chapter. No better mode of exercise can be recommended. Father O'Neill says: Walking is the oldest of all forms of exercise, "yet notwithstanding the world's progress, it still remains to-day the simplest, least expensive, most healthful, and most constantly available of all methods by which to recreate our physical nature. And walking

The Seminarian

— regular, systematic, daily walking — is the ideal exercise of the priest.” Too much cannot be said in its favor, and the habit of it ought be acquired at the seminary. Swimming, rowing, golf, tennis, baseball, and most other forms of outdoor physical exertion are good at the proper time and place.

Two failings with regard to exercising are to be avoided — the one of not taking enough, the other of taking too much. There are two classes of theological students. One class spurns all athletics, and these as a rule do not take enough exercise; the second delight in them, and are apt to give them too much attention. The happy mean will be found in the advice of the Cardinal above quoted: “Throw yourselves heart and soul in the recreations and outdoor exercises which your seminary provides and organizes for your benefit.” Every seminary provides for these. Confine yourself to the time, but use it well to invigorate the body. Thus new animus and spirit is given the soul for study, prayer, and the practise of virtue. We may consider it a sacred obligation to use the time allotted for physical exercise for

The Seminarian

that purpose. To deprive the body of the exercise which it needs is certainly wrong. A healthy man can at least walk during that time.

Be not a "*homo solitarius*." Choose to associate with all your companions. It is a social duty which you owe one another to strive to amuse and entertain. As a member of a community each is called to contribute his share to the common good.

The conversations at recreation are to be of a cheerful, light character. The serious matters of study are better barred during this time. Much clearness and light are brought to a matter of study in the freshness developed after thorough recreation — much more than will be realized by a long discussion on the subject during recreation, depriving that time of all its good effects.

A contentious man spoils the good humor of others and puts himself in bad humor. With the strain brought on by earnest application to study, the propensity to irritability and sensitiveness is developed to a high degree. To counteract this propensity, recreation is necessary. We must, therefore,

The Seminarian

continually strive to hold ourselves in check, and be careful not to allow such feelings to assert themselves. Let us be ever ready to make allowances for human frailty, which may allow these to come to the surface in others. "Let a moderate cheerfulness predominate in our conversation. St. Romuald and St. Anthony are highly commended, for, notwithstanding all their austerities, both their countenance and their discourse were adorned with joy, gayety, and courtesy. 'Rejoice with them that rejoice.'¹ And again I say to you with the Apostle, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men.'² To rejoice in our Lord the subject of your joy must not only be lawful, but also decent; and this I say, because there are some things lawful, which yet are not decent; and that your modesty may be known to all, keep yourself free from insolence, which is always reprehensible. To cause one of the company to fall down, to disfigure another's face, are foolish and insolent merriments."³

¹ Rom. xii, 15.

² Phil. iv, 4, 5.

³ "The Devout Life." Of Conversation and Solitude.

The Seminarian

Contribute your share to the relaxation and recreation necessary for yourself and companions, draw as much benefit from them as lies in your power, but do all in the spirit of charity and brotherly love; realizing that even recreation, when confined to the proper time, place, and manner is a work pleasing to God, and a means of practising a diversity of virtues. The opinion must not be held that recreation is unnecessary and a loss of time. Experience, as well as the practise of the founders of all religious orders, attest to its need, and emphasize the fact that it is not incongruous with sanctity even to a high degree. This fact is often forced home to those who do not realize it by the mental and nervous disorders which follow upon its wilful neglect.

CHAPTER IX

Seminary Spirit · Self-sanctification
Obedience · Brotherly Love
Modesty · Study

MUCH is said of the spirit which prevails in various seminaries — but the spirit which animates the students and faculty gives atmosphere to the seminary. If the students and faculty are “*cor unum et anima una*,” all imbued with the same thought and sentiment, the seminary spirit must necessarily be a good one.

The spirit of the seminary will depend upon the conception of what a seminary is supposed to be, namely, the conservatory in which youthful aspirants to the priesthood like tender plants are to be nourished, trained, and aided to wax strong, to grow into the tree that is to be transplanted in the world where its fruits should abound. When this thought and aim imbues students and faculty

The Seminarian

alike, then the results attained are splendid, eliciting the blessing of God and conferring inestimable benefits upon mankind.

The signs that this idea prevails will be seen by the principles imbibed and carried out in seminary life. The spirit of piety, genuine and unfeigned, will spread its odor through the whole community. It will be safeguarded and nourished and absorbed by each individual. Personal sanctification will be recognized as the greatest factor for one's own as well as for others' benefit. The moral feebleness of our age, to which a recent non-Catholic writer draws attention, and the pernicious error so commonly acted upon, if not openly advocated, that what we accomplish for the general good is of greater importance than what we do for personal sanctification, are due to the neglect of Holy Scripture. The ideals of early Christianity have become obscure. In trying to be truly good, the first ascetics of the Church became truly useful; and their usefulness far outlasted their generation. "Our Poor Laws," remarks Dr. Hannay in the introduction of one of his books, "have proved

The Seminarian

a dismal substitute for the beautiful charities of the early monks. Their work is written large across the pages of history. The Benedictine Rule, the parent of all the great rules down to the time of the Mendicant Orders, was nothing but the systematic adaptation of the teaching and experience of the Egyptian hermits to the needs of western life. Through them a great good which could not have been foreseen was accomplished. It is, perhaps, just because they denied themselves the satisfaction of aiming at usefulness, that they were so greatly used." "This," adds the learned Anglican writer, "seems to be one of the laws of the divine government of things."

"Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you." Teaching like this is what the world has lost sight of, though it was never in sorer need of it. The Abbot Moses, one of the earliest of the Egyptian Fathers, used to say: We must constantly fall back upon meditation on the Holy Scriptures, and raise our minds toward the recollection of spiritual things,

The Seminarian

and the desire of perfection and the hope of future bliss. In this way spiritual thoughts are sure to arise in us, and our minds will dwell on the things on which we have been meditating. If we are overcome by sloth and carelessness, and spend our time in idle gossip, or if we are entangled in the cares of this world and unnecessary anxieties, the result will be that tares will spring up in our hearts. As Our Lord and Saviour says: "Wheresoever the treasure of our works or purpose may be, there also our heart is sure to continue." Personal sanctity is the foremost lesson the seminary has to inculcate and the individual has to attain. The good spirit of the seminary will be in proportion to the earnestness and sincerity with which this aim is followed and lived up to. Where God's eye rests with pleasure there will be found happiness and joy. And as the days spent in striving to attain personal sanctity are happy and spiritually blessed so these days are numbered among the most joyful of the priest's life, and the companions of these days remembered with love and pleasure always. It is the endeavor to serve God

The Seminarian

as earnestly and exactly as lies in one's power that inspires brotherly love among students for their fellow-students, between students and the faculty. This love of God and love of one's neighbor is the secret of the good spirit which reigns at a seminary. And where this spirit is lacking, the ultimate cause for its absence will be found in failure to strive for personal sanctity.

Granted that students and faculty are actuated by this great aim, there will be no difficulty of a serious nature about obedience. Obedience is one of the greatest factors in gaining personal sanctity. The rules, the commands of superiors are but manifestations of the adorable will of God, and, as is evident, there cannot even be an attempt at personal sanctity if the manifest will of God is not followed.

Obedience is that element in seminary life which furnishes the means of self-denial and trains to self-control. It is the means of penance ever at hand, and when practised in the spirit of penance is as acceptable to God as the discipline and fasting of other and stronger days.

The Seminarian

With obedience must be linked that other virtue most important for self-sanctification in seminary life: brotherly love. Our blessed Saviour said to His disciples: "This is My commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you."¹ St. Gregory explains that Christ gives this single commandment as though all the others were contained in this one, and indeed so we may consider it. Just as the many branches of a tree are clothed in verdure and nourished by the roots from whence they proceed, so are the virtues nourished and proceed from charity. To love one's neighbor as Christ loved His disciples is to love them with a love based, above all, on the love of God. The love of God is the root of all virtues. All important, then, is the endeavor for all seminarians to live in unanimity, without contention and strife, without petty jealousies and suspicions, but with genuine good-will and charity, with forbearance and kindness for one another, and all this for the love of Christ and in obedience to His command.

Again this desire and effort for personal

¹ John xv, 12.

The Seminarian

sanctity will influence the seminarian in his dress, manner, conversation, and carriage. This absorbing thought will moderate and modify all these things, so as to bring them within the confines of modesty.

Next in importance to personal sanctity is the acquisition of knowledge. It is the task of every theological student not only to acquire knowledge, but also to attain dexterity in using it. The seminary affords every opportunity of fulfilling this task. It is only necessary for the student to earnestly apply himself. A pamphlet of the Episcopalians of Pennsylvania had this to say of the Catholic seminaries: "By a practical training greatly more protracted and more detailed than anything we can boast of he (the seminarian) is schooled and drilled to the highest efficiency, as a captain in the ranks. The field officers in that religious body, the men who are to be its specialists as preachers, organizers, and educators, are prepared in very different schools, and are trained in a singularly laborious, wise, and exacting course for the post of leadership for which their native gifts fit them. In all

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this we are centuries behind the Church of Rome." It is safe to say that there is no seminary which does not offer a good practical course of studies. It is but necessary for the student to make use of it to be trained to be a zealous and efficient priest.

In order to do efficient work good health is necessary. The means afforded by the seminary for the promotion of health and happiness must be used judiciously but conscientiously. "There is no riches above the riches of the health of the body; and there is no pleasure above the joy of the heart."¹ The recreations afforded and suggested should, therefore, be engaged in, even though at times there is a disinclination for them. Good health should be sought for God's sake, as ill health is patiently borne for God's sake.

"The priesthood is the highest dignity upon earth. It surpasses that of kings and emperors, nay even of the angels themselves. 'For,' as St. John Chrysostom remarks: 'the power of kings is only over the bodies of men, whereas that of the priest is over

¹ Ecclus. xxx, 16.

The Seminarian

their souls. On the priest are conferred powers not accorded to angels; for to what angel was it ever given to convert bread into the body of our Lord by his word? and not all the angels together could grant pardon for a single sin. By his office a priest is only concerned with heavenly things; he stands between God and man; he lays our petitions before the Most High and conveys divine graces to us. He is a mediator between God and man, 'the angel of the Lord of hosts' ¹ the messenger of God to make known His will to men, he is God's representative, His ambassador, His plenipotentiary. . . . The priestly office is one of immense responsibility. They have to render an account of the souls committed to their charge." ²

"The duties of those who will have to give an account for souls," says St. Bernard, "are heavy and onerous." On the day of his ordination St. John Chrysostom said: "I now need your prayers a thousandfold more, lest in the day of Judgment I should be cast into the exterior darkness." ³ You

¹ Mal. ii, 7.

² Cf. Hebr. xiii, 17.

³ "The Catechism Explained," p. 644s.

The Seminarian

are preparing now to assume such dignities and responsibilities. Prepare well, ever mindful of the words of Christ: "You have not chosen Me; but I have chosen you: and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit and your fruit should remain." ¹

And, after a good preparation, may you go forth into the vineyard of the Lord, to accomplish much good, and with the prayer always on your lips to inspire you with zeal, courage, and confidence: "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee."

¹ John xv, 16.

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